Baba Farid

Balwant Singh Anand

5254

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Indian
Literature

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BABA FARID

by

BALWANT SINGH ANAND

SAHITYA AKADEMI
NEW DELHI

SAHITYA AKADEMI
Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi-1
Rabindra Sarobar Stadium, Block V-B, Calcutta-29.
21 Haddows Road, Madras-6.
Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Building,
172, Naigaon Cross Road, Dadar, Bombay-14.

5254

State Museum Library
Lucknow

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First Published : 1975

Published by Sahitya Akademi and printed at Prominent Printers
K-9, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-110032

Preface

THE winter of 1973-74 in Delhi will be remembered, among other things, for the celebration of the octocentenary of Shaikh Farid-ud-din, Ganj-i-Shakar. The credit for this event should go to the Punjabi University, Patiala, which arranged an International Seminar on Baba Farid in Delhi. Historians, scholars and lovers of Farid's poetry collected at the India International Centre and for three days discussed various facets of the life and works of Shaikh Farid. It was a meeting of like-minded people and served to strengthen bonds of friendship among Indian and foreign scholars. We, who had admired the *slokas* of Baba Farid and had sung them so often, learnt many aspects of Sufism as represented in his works hitherto unknown to us. We also had the privilege of enjoying a Faridi *langar* (lunch) at the Chishti Cultural Centre adjacent to the mausoleum of Khwaja Nizamuddin Chishti. Before the lunch, the hosts had arranged a delightful function at which prayers were offered to the departed saints and Kawalis were sung in the well-known emotional and ecstatic style of the Chishti *Silsilah*. The seminar and the functions connected with it heightened our awareness of Farid's contribution to the composite culture of our country.

It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise for me, when soon after the seminar, the Sahitya Akadami invited me to write a monograph on Baba Farid. Nothing could have been more timely and more welcome. But the stipulated deadline for its completion added an element of urgency to it. However, I was happy to undertake the work. I was faced with two difficulties. One was the very limited authentic material avilable on the life of the poet and secondly, the existing translations of his verses did not do justice to the original text. Poetry in its totality cannot be translated from one language to another. The emotionally surcharged nuances of poetry and its deep association with its cultural and social background have no counterpart in the language of a foreign land, particularly when one language belongs to the East and the other to the West. Farid's verses have been translated by Macauliffe and Gopal Singh. Macauliffe's translation is too literal and misses the deeper religious and spiritual connotations while that of Gopal Singh, though comparatively more imaginative, tends to take all manner of liberty and often misses the mark. Some verses have been translated by Khushwant Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib. They are certainly an improvement on the earlier translations but they have yet to translate all the verses and make them available to the public. I had, therefore, mostly to fall back on Macauliffe's translation and provide what I thought was lacking in the form of comments and analysis of the verses. It is hoped that the reader will get some idea of the underlying music and deeper meanings of Farid's *slokas*.

The present monograph seeks to provide a brief account of the development of Sufism in Arabia and Persia and its advent in India in the shape of various Sufi *Silsilahs*. Apart from some details about the life of Shaikh Farid, an attempt has been made to assess the poetical value of Farid's verse incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs. It is hoped that the monograph will provide a fair idea of the personality and writings of Shaikh Farid-ud-din-Ganj-i-Shakar.

41, Pashchimi Marg,
Vasant Vihar,
New Delhi.

BALWANT SINGH ANAND

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CHAPTER ONE

The Historical Perspective

MYSTICISM is the central core and essence of all religions. It is born of the universal craving of the human spirit for personal communion with the Ultimate Reality. For the intensely religious people, religion without the mystical experience is meaningless. They are not satisfied with the formal and orthodox aspects of religion such as prayers, fasts and pilgrimages. Their hunger is for something deeper and more profound, and therefore, they naturally turn to mystic speculation and experience. In Islam, as in other religions, mysticism, though deeply rooted in the religion itself, was a subsequent development and did not form part of the religion as propounded by Prophet Muhammad. Islamic mysticism is known as Sufism. The growth and development of mystical ideal in Islam and its advent in India in the shape of Sufi *Silsilahs* cannot be comprehended without some idea of the basic tenets and doctrines of Islam, the inherent tendencies and characteristics in Islam itself which served as the basis of mystical speculation, the widespread acceptance and popularity that Sufism enjoyed in Iran, particularly among scholars and poets and finally, the march of events that brought Islam to India and, in its wake, the Maulvis, Ulemas and Sufis. A study of this nature, covering a history of over a thousand years and ranging over far-flung places would certainly require many volumes to do it justice, yet a brief outline appears necessary to provide the backdrop to our understanding of Sufism as expressed in the works of Sufi poets.

Islam is an all-embracing religion, covering every aspect of life—spiritual, social, political and economic. "The subject of Quran is of a man in his totality. It comprehends every aspect of man—his beliefs, his values, methods of worship, rules of conduct, laws of society, principles of government and regulation about economic activity." This comprehensive system emerged from the two basic doctrines of Islam: the Oneness of God and God as the creator of heavens and earth. Since He is the One and only God, He is supreme and sovereign of all other beings. His laws and decrees are absolute. His judgement is final. Islam does not permit of minor gods or goddesses and none can intercede with His judgement. He is the Creator, the only self-existing being; all else is created by Him and therefore must submit to His will. Prophets, too, are regarded as men who must obey His command. They are important simply because they are the vehicle of His message and are the recipients of His favour and grace. They are, therefore, to be respected and followed.

Islam makes complete and clear-cut distinction between the Creator and his creation. They live and have their beings in different worlds: God in heavens and man on earth or, after death, in paradise or hell. There is no meeting or merging of the two; the finite does not merge into the Infinite.

Unlike any other religion, Islam is a revealed religion. Quran contains the messages that God revealed to Muhammad from time to time. Whenever the verses were revealed, they were recorded by the scribes at Muhammad's behest. Quran is thus the word of God and is, therefore, the supreme authority to which the Muslims look for guidance and justification. These revelations provide the code of conduct in spheres temporal and spiritual. The code was to be practised and preached: it had to become a part of the socio-political life of the people and the message was required to be spread abroad. But above all, it was the duty of Muhammad, as the leader and the one to whom messages had been revealed to take them to the people and explain to them their meanings and implications. Muhammad set about his task with great vigour and devotion. He organised a new society and set up a new order based on the laws enunciated in the Quran. Indeed he was a revolutionary who changed the entire life of the Arabs and through his message so inspired them that they conquered vast territories and carried the banner of Islam to distant lands.

It is not surprising that Quran is looked upon by the Mulsims as the primary pillar of Islam.

Our knowledge of the life of Muhammad is based on the scanty references in the Quran and the anecdotes or traditions (*hadith*) preserved by his companions and followers and handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The exemplary way of life as prescribed by these traditions was called Sunnah.

The Quran and the traditions put together form the sources of Islamic Sharia—the code of laws and regulations that govern the entire life of the Muslims. The Quran and Sunnah cover not only the spiritual aspects of man's life but comprise the totality in respect of his social behaviour.

Since it is demanded of man to become perfect, his position among the created things is regarded as the highest. Man is endowed with a will and intellect which enable him to gain knowledge and through knowledge obtain unlimited power. This intellect also makes it possible for man to understand the forces of nature and to utilize them for his benefit. Man is endowed with discriminatory powers. He can choose between good and evil. This serves as the basis of morality. All these powers ultimately help him to attain perfection (*tazkiya*); this is the final end of Sharia. He has his responsibility towards God, to love Him, to admit His Lordship, to worship and bow before Him in all humility.

The Islamic concept of life hereafter is simple; it is a life based on the judgement of the Lord on the day of resurrection. After death, the soul remains in the intermediate stage until its fate is decided on the Judgement Day. Thereafter it leads a perfect life in Paradise, in communion with God but not a part of God as believed by the Vedantic philosophers. The concept of Nirvan, the merging of the finite with the Infinite, is not acceptable to Islam.

A word or two may be said about the religious life as prescribed by the laws enunciated in Quran. It begins with *Kalima: "La Ilah illa Allah Muhummad rasul Allha."* There is only one God and Muhammad is His messenger. To a Musalman, these two things constitute the basic principles of faith: belief in the Unity of God and acceptance of Muhammad as prophet. Besides this, he is enjoined to believe in angels and other messengers of God. Muslims were also-required to believe in resurrection, Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hell. Let us not forget that this faith was essential for life in this world and the life hereafter. In addition to faith in God (*iman*), a Musalman was called upon to offer prayers five times a day, give a certain proportion of his income as alms (*zakaat*), fast during the months of Ramzan and, once in his life, go on pilgrimage to Mecca. All these acts were important but unless they were backed by an ethical way of life, a life pure and based on moral principles, they lose their validity in the eyes of God.

Let us now turn to the relationship of Islam and mysticism. Islamic mysticism or Sufism as it is called, first expressed itself in asceticism. The earliest Sufis were ascetics. Some of the companions of Muhammad, during his lifetime despised the world and led austere life. They shunned worldly pleasures and adopted the life of poverty voluntarily. Asceticism came to be accepted as an essential feature of the life of a Sufi. These Sufis laid great stress on *tauba* (repentence) and *tawakkul* (trust in God). They were inspired by the conception of the transcendent God. By the second century of Hegira, Sufism had become a monotheistic theosophy, of which the fear of God and the Day of Judgement were the dominant features. But all along, the ascetic had been stressing the loving adoration of God. This adoration was best expressed in the utterances of the woman mystic Rabi'a (*d.* 185/801) who said, "Love of God hath so absorbed me that neither love nor hate of any other thing remains in my heart." The doctrine of Divine Love came to be associated with her name. In her verses she used the symbolic language of human love to describe the relation between the mystic and her divine Beloved, a practice which became popular in later centuries, both in Arabic and Persian languages.

It may also be mentioned that, notwithstanding the restriction imposed by Islamic laws and regulations, many enterprising spirits sought to find the truth and aspired for a personal and direct experience of the Ultimate Reality. They turned to mystical speculation and experience as the source of spiritual enlightenment. They found little comfort in the orthodox and formalistic study of Quran and Hadith with their stress on prayers, fasts and pilgrimages. But let us be clear about one thing. The Sufis did not discard or disown the orthodox religion; they were eminently religious people but they were not satisfied with its purely ethical and moralistic approach. They yearned for the metaphysical, the supranatural. They emphasised the need for inner discipline and purity of heart and insisted that injunctions and prohibition of priests were of no use for communion with God. They wanted to study entirely different dimensions of existence which could only be perceived when the five senses were shut out. This was the inner world, the world of the spirit which they found to be much more satisfying and sustaining than the mundane world. It consists of the knowledge of the Infinite, whether it is described as the merging of the finite with the Infinite or the consciousness of the presence of the Ultimate Reality. It is the eternal bliss, the fulfilment of the universal longing of man to become one with the Supreme Being. This is the end of the spiritual quest and beyond this is the Ineffable and the Immanent.

Before proceeding further, it may be explained that the word 'Sufi' is derived from the word *suf* which in Arabic means 'wool'. The ascetics in Arabia and Iran wore woollen clothes as against silken or cotton clothes worn by ordinary people. Baba Farid, in one of his *slokas*, refers to himself as a darwesh wrapped in *kamli* — woollen sheet. Some writers have, however, suggested that the term 'Sufi' is derived from the Greek word *sophos* which means gnosis, knowledge or spiritual knowledge. A Sufi would accordingly be one who has attained or seeks attainment through spiritual knowledge. Another explanation is that 'Sufi' means pure and describes one who has attained purity of heart. Of all these explanations, the one most acceptable is that of the wearer of woollen garments, the ascetic who has withdrawn from the world and leads his life in solitude seeking communion with God.

The Sufis found inspiration for their mystical belief in Quran itself and in the various experiences described by the Prophet. Though the Prophet laid stress primarily on *Shariat* (external laws), it becomes obvious from a study of Quran that there are verses which deal with *Tariqat* (mystical path) and *Haqiqat* (gnosis). There are verses that speak of the inscrutable ways of the Almighty and the mystery that lies behind His power and command that controls the orderly functioning of the cosmos. There is His all-embracing love for man permitting of personal approach to Him. There are His other attributes mentioned in Quran which indicate the way for direct communion with the Almighty. But above all, it was the revelations of Muhammad which convinced the Sufis about the possibility of establishing direct contact with God. If God spoke to Muhammad, surely he would talk to others who followed the Prophet's footsteps or suceeded in pleasing Him in other ways. Secondly, the Sufis laid great stress on the ascension of the Prophet (*mi'raj*). This legend is described in great detail in the *hadith*. Muhammad was borne on the winged horse named Buraq to the seventh heavens and was brought in the presence of God.

In another part of the *hadith*, Muhammad is described to have spent a night in the presence of God. God also ordered him to return to the world "for the sake of establishing the religious law". There are many other occasions on which, according to Quran, God spoke directly to Muhammad.

This direct, almost intimate, relationship with God naturally inspired the Sufi mystics and paved the way for Islamic mysticism.

Early in the history of Islamic mysticism, the Sufis and other theologists came under the influence of Greek thought. The two most important concepts of Neo-Platonism were pantheism and love as a force for spiritual synthesis. Pantheism is the doctrine of *Wahadat-ul-Wajud* (unity of all existence) and *Shabud* (manifesation of Divine in the Universe). As God was omnipresent, He was there in man himself. It was a high watermark of Sufism to see God everywhere. The great poets Rumi and Attar gave expression to these ideas in their poetical works.

One of the most important persons in the history of Sufism was Bayazid Bustami. He gave a new turn to the doctrine of *Tasawwuf* (loving devotion to God) by introducing into it the element of ecstasy. The Neo-Platonic idea of love as a spiritual force came to be accepted by the Persian Sufi poets and resulted in the production of poetical works of great merit. But Bayazid gave this loving adoration an emotional and erotic twist. The love theme took the shape of a quest for a union with the beloved. Rabi'a's symbolic language of human love came to be presented with great emotional fervour, resulting in ecstasy in which the union of the lover and the beloved amounted to the one merging into the other. Love came to be exalted to the level of worship and ecstasy to that of meditation. To achieve this ecstasy of love, Sufis introduced community singing and dancing as parts of devotional act. Every aspect of love is presented, the meeting and parting of lovers, the sighs and tears, the ecstasy and agony, the eternal longing, the desire and its consummation, and the description of every part of the beloved is presented in voluptuous imagery but, of course, all this is interpreted spiritually. Thus *Ishq* (passion) is exalted to spiritual heights and becomes the sole means of attaining union with God.

The orthodox Muslims objected to both these approaches, in which men like Bayazid became devotees of pantheism and perceived God in everything. He said, "Beneath this cloak of mine, there is nothing but God. Glory to me. How great is my majesty!" Bayazid was banished from his town. Bayazid's idea was further developed by Husain Ibn Mansur Al-Hallaj. His mystical formula *Ana'l Haq* (I am God) became an important factor in the development of mysticism in Persia and India. Hallaj affirmed the idea of the transcendence of God. He believed that it was the manifestation of Divine Love that determined the multiplicity of His attributes. This was the basis of his doctrine concerning the nature of *Insan-i-Kamal* (the perfect man) which was revived by Dr Mohammad Iqbal in the twentieth century. Yet, for this doctrine, Hallaj was condemned and executed in the reign of Caliph Al-Muqtadir.

The orthodox also objected to the communal or individual singing and dancing of Sufis and the mixing of emotionalism and eroticism with spiritualism.

It was natural that out of all these ramifications emerged a Sufi way of life and thought. Sufism was deeply embedded in *Shariat* but, at the same time, Sufis sincerely believed that *Shariat* led to *Tariqat*, and *Tariqat*, in turn, to *Marifat* (gnosis). Hence the attainment of realization or union with the Ultimate Reality was not possible without *Shariat* and, in turn, the observance of *Shariat*, without being conscious of the ultimate goal, was meaningless. So while advocating prayers, fasts and pilgrimages, the Sufi way of life started with *tauba* (repentence), i.e., the Sufi abandoned sinful life and devoted himself to the service of God. For the purpose of devotion to God, the Sufi withdrew from the worldly pursuits and lived a solitary life. He constantly lived in the awe of God which led to purity of life and greater determination of his pursuits. With trust in God (*Tawakkul*), he lived a life of contentment, trusting God to provide the necessities of living. He observed silence for it helped concentration and meditation. He felt he was the servant of God and had firm faith in God and was thankful to Him for His mercies. He believed that moral life (*Khuluq*) was the basis of spiritual life. And finally, he firmly believed that the way of salvation lay through deep love and intense yearning for God, through contemplation and meditation and gnosis (*Marifat*), the spiritual knowledge. This was the ideal life which the Sufi sought to achieve.

In the seventh century A.D. Persia became a part of the Muslim world. The meeting of the two cultures, the Arabic-Islamic culture and Aryan-Iranian culture in Persia, resulted in an amazing acceptance and expansion of Sufism. Here was a soil where Sufism blossomed forth in great abundance. Sufism made great contribution to lofty ethics and subtle mataphysics but above all to literature. It was as though the imagination of the Iranian literature was gripped by Sufi concepts and their inherent aesthetical and imaginative genius gave birth to Persian poetry of noble height and eloquence. Classical Persian poetry is to a great extent Sufi in content and inspiration.

As a result of a large number of treatises on Sufism written in Arabic and Persian during the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. and the popularity that Sufism gained through Persian literature in Iran and Afghanistan, a number of groups came to be organised in the eleventh century. They were distinguished by their emphasis on different doctrines of Sufism. These groups helped to organise and integrate the mystical movement in different parts of Persia and Afghanistan. They were also responsible for defining the mystic concepts and laying down the basic principles of the mode of life to be lived in *Khanqahs* (monasteries) and *Jamat Khanas*. In this manner, several orders (*silsilahs*) of Sufis came to be established. The most outstanding among them were the Chishtiyas, Suharawardiyas, Naqshbandiyas and Qadiriyas. The Chishtiya *silsilah* was named after Chist, a village near Harat in Afghanistan where the founder of the order Khwaja Abu-Ishaq resided sometime in the twelfth century. Its earlier history cannot be traced but it was introduced into India by Khwaja Mu'ui-ud-din Hasan Sigzi. He arrived in India in the reign of Prithvi Raj and chose Ajmer as the location of his hospice. Two other centres of Chishtiya order were established, one at Delhi by Bakhtiyar Kaki and another at Nagor by Hamid-ud-Din. Farid-ud-Din was the disciple of Bakhtiyar Kaki and practised austere ascetic disciplines at his centre in Ajodhan. The most eminent Sufi of this order was Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, who exercised a powerful pietistic influence over Muslim society of his age and was held in great esteem. His hospice is in Delhi and even today thousands flock to his mausoleum to pray and seek inner peace.

The Suharawardi order was founded by Shaikh Abu Najib Abdul Qabir Suharawardi and developed by his nephew Shihab-ud-Din Suharawardi in Baghdad. Due to the disturbances in Persia and Iraq, many of his followers migrated to India. One of them, Baha-ud-din Zakariya established this order in India in the thirteenth century. He chose Multan as the centre of *silsilah*. He established cordial relations with Iltutmish and his hospice was known for its wealth and affluence.

The Naqshbandiya order originated from an earlier Silsilah known as Silsilah-i-Khawaggan. Its founder was Khwaja Ahmed, a well-known religious leader in Central Asia. It is generally believed that he converted the Turks to Islam. He was responsible for the popularity and spread of Sufism through Turkistan. Naqshbandiyas enjoyed the patronage of Babur and it was established in India by Muhammad Baqibillah (1563-1603) in the reign of Akbar.

The Qadiriya *silsilah* was founded in Iraq by Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani, in the twelfth century. He was an oustanding mystic, saint and preacher. The Qadiriya silsilah was introduced into India by Muhammad Ghawth who set up his hospice in Uch in 1482. It gained prominence in the seventeenth century and its leader at that time was Muhammad Mir, who was the preceptor of Dara Shukoh and Jahan Ara. In modern times, this is the most widely spread *silsilah* in India.

The advent of Sufism in India is very much linked with the historical developments which brought Islam to this country. What changed the history of India was the numerous expeditions of Mahmud of Ghazni soon after his accession in A.D. 998. He opened the floodgates of India and exposed the vulnerability and disunity of Indian kingdoms. He helped the foundation of the Turkish empire in India by paving the way for the establishment of the future Sultanate of Delhi. It was, however, Muhammed Ghuri who conquered Lahore and Multan in A.D. 1186 and laid the foundation of Muslim domination of northern India and ended the Ghaznavid rule in Punjab. Though the Ghaznavids were Turks, their cultural language was Persian. Under them, Lahore became the secondary capital and was referred to as "little Ghazna". It is here that Persian became the language of the Muslim elite. After Ghazni was sacked and burned by Alaud-Din Jahansoz (World-Burner), Lahore became the principal intellectual centre of the Ghaznavid Kingdom and later its importance increased, when under Khusrau Malik, it became the capital of the kingdom. Naturally, it attracted scholars and poets from Afghanistan who attached themselves to the court. With the shifting of the court to Delhi in 1193, Delhi became the centre of Persian poetry in the sub-continent and continued to occupy that place of distinction till the end of Mughal empire in India.

Among the violent turns and twists of history that brought refugees from abroad to India was the rise of the Mongols in Central Asia towards the end of the eleventh century. In 1214, Chingez Khan, the leader of the Mongol confederates, captured Peking and then turned westward and with lightning rapidity conquered Turkistan, Persia, Armenia and northern India up to Lahore. The Muslim Governments in Ajam and Central Asia were pulled down and life and property was laid waste by the Mongols. Consequently, streams of refugees, leaving behind their hearths and homes, fled to India to find some kind of refuge and escape the fury of the invaders. The city of Delhi served as a magnetic lode-star and attracted men of learning and erudition. Among the great theologians who flocked to Delhi were such eminent people as Shaikh Abdul Hasan Al-Hujwari, Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chisti, Sheikh Jalal-ud-din Tabrizi, Saiyad Jalal-ud-Din Bukhari and Qutbud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki. Most of these people set up their schools of philosophy and started preaching their own doctrines in their hospices.

It may, however, be mentioned that migration to India was taking place even before the onslaught of Chingez Khan in Persia. In Khuristan interminable wars were fought by the tribes among themselves, e.g., in A.D. 1153, the Ghuzz tribes rose against Sultan Saugar and devastated Khuristan and several other provinces. They conquered Ghazni and the Shah had to find refuge in India. The incessant wars between Ghazni and Kabul and recurrent invasions from Central Asia forced many people to seek fortune in the vast fertile plains of India where the Turks were establishing an empire for themselves. Among the refugees from Kabul came a learned man, Qazi Shu'aib, who was not only a scholar but a deeply religious man. Accompanied by his three sons, Shu'aib reached Lahore sometime in A.D. 1157. Shu'aib was the grandfather of Farid Mas'ud who was born in 1173, sixteen years after the migration of Shu'aib to India.

CHAPTER TWO

Life and Teachings

NOT much is known about Qazi Shu'aib's family. But according to *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, Shu'aib belonged to a ruling family of Kabul which had reached its zenith under Farruk Shah. But Farruk Shah lost his kingdom when the Ghaznavids came into power and the family was deprived of its prestigious position. History, however, does not mention the name of Farruk Shah as king of Kabul and it is, therefore, possible that it might be a legend circulated by the followers of Farid. Another writer traces the ancestry of Shu'aib to Caliph Amir-ul-Mumin Umar Faruq. Be that as it may, it is certain that Shu'aib came of a noble family and was deeply conversant with Quranic literature and had enjoyed some kind of high office before leaving Afghanistan.

Shu'aib was a recluse, more interested in the quiet study of theology than the pomp and show of court life and the gaiety of Lahore. Soon after his arrival, he left Lahore and moved to Kasur. The Qazi of Kasur was well acquainted with the background of Shu'aib's family. He informed the sultan of the arrival of the distingnished scholar belonging to a noble family. The sultan offered to appoint him to a high office but Shu'aib politely declined the offer with the remark that court life and high offices no longer attracted him. However, the sultan appointed him Qazi of Khotwal in the Multan district of Punjab where Shu'aib spent the remaining years of his life.

One of the three sons of Shu'aib was Jamal-ud-Din who was married in Khotwal to Qarsum Bibi, daughter of Shaikh Wajib-ud-Din Khogendi. They had three sons, Izzud-din, Farid Mas'ud and Najib-ud-Din. Farid Mas'ud was born in 1173. As a saint and third head of the Chisti *silsilah*, he came to be known as Shaikh Farid-ud-Din, Ganj-i-Shakar. The honorific 'Farid-ud-Din' was given to him in recognition of his high spiritual accomplishments after the Sufi saint Farid-ud-Din Attar. He was called Ganj-i-Shakar, the treasury of sugar, because of a number of miracles which occurred in his life and some of which he himself was supposed to have performed.

The first miracle is associated with Farid's childhood and has been turned into a delightful story. Farid's mother, who was a very devout and pious woman, wished to inculcate in Farid the habit of regular prayers. She told him that God sent sugar to children who punctually offered their prayers. In order to strengthen his belief, she used to place a packet of sugar under his pillow every night. After some time she stopped putting the sugar but, to her surprise, she learnt from her son that the packet continued to appear under the pillow. She made enquiries whether any one else had been playing the trick with Farid. When she found that no one else was involved, she naturally came to the conclusion that the miracle was performed by some divine power. Maybe it was then that she gave him the surname of Ganj-i--Shakar.

The second story is related to the extreme penance Farid underwent in search of the Ultimate Reality. He had been fasting for days and had grown extremely weak. One day when he went to see his preceptor, he slipped on a muddy road and some of the mud went into his mouth. It is said that it was instantaneously turned into sugar. When he reached his master's house, he said, "Baba Farid-ud-Din Mas'ud! A little mud that went into your mouth has turned into sugar. No wonder, if the Almighty turns your whole being into a treasure of sugar and keeps it always sweet".[1]

There is another story which tells of a miracle performed by Farid himself. One day Farid met some merchants carrying sugar on their camels. Farid enquired as to what they were carrying. The merchants, fearing that the Sheikh may demand some sugar, replied that they were carrying salt. It is said that instantly the sugar turned into salt. When the merchants reached their destination and discovered what had happened to their sugar, they returned to Farid and repented. Farid took pity upon them and after necessary admonition, turned the salt into sugar. The news spread around and people called him Ganj-i-Shakar.

There is one more story. Once when Farid was feeling terribly hungry, he put some pebbles in his mouth to assuage his hunger. Instantly the pebbles turned into sugar.

Similar other miracles are attributed to Farid. But most probably it was the sweetness of his words, the kindness of his actions and the warmth and affection he displayed towards one and all that earned him the title of Ganj-i-Shakar. Popularly and reverently, he is remembered as Baba Farid.

Farid received his early schooling in Khotwal where he learnt Persian, Arabic and the elementary principles of Quranic study. At the age of eighteen, he went to Multan and joined the *madrasah* in the mosque of Maulana Minhaj-ud-din Tirmidhi. Here he studied Quran, Islamic jurisprudence and other allied subjects. He is said to have committed the whole of Quran to memory and even in those adolescent years, recited it once a day. His diligence and devotion to theological studies were very pronounced and were commented upon by his teachers. His absorption in prayer earned him the nickname of "Qazi bachcha diwana", the crazy son of the Qazi. Already the reputation of a mystic-in-the-making was spreading in the town. It is reported that such a reputation made Shaikh Jalal-ud-Din Tabrizi, who was a close associate of both Shaikh Baha-ud-Din Zakariyya and Khwaja Qutb-bu-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, pay him a visit. Shaikh Jalal wanted to present a pomegranate to Farid but since Farid was fasting, Farid could not eat it. Later Farid found one seed of the pomegranate lying on the floor. When he ate it, he felt a "sudden spiritual illumination within him". Later when he narrated the incident to his future spiritual preceptor Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, he said, "All the spiritual blessing was in that one seed; it was destined for you and it reached you. There was nothing in the rest of the fruit".[1]

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[1] *Life and Times of Farid* by K.A. Nizami, p. 116.

It was while studying in the mosque at Multan that Farid met his future preceptor, Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki. Something stirred deeply within Farid when he saw Bakhtiyar Kaki. It was a meeting of two akin souls and the young Farid felt that here was a guide and teacher who could lead him on the spiritual path. He placed his head on Bakhtiyar Kaki's feet and begged him to accept him (Farid) as his disciple. He also expressed his desire to accompany Bakhtiyar Kaki to Delhi and requested that he may be admitted to his hospice. The future preceptor was touched with the ardour and passion of Farid for spiritual studies. He promised to accept him as his disciple but, for the time being, advised him to continue his studies. He was told to come to Delhi after the completion of his studies because it would then be the proper time for his advanced mystical training in Sufism. At the end of his studies in Multan, Farid went to Kandhar for higher studies, where he stayed for five years. Thereafter, it is said, he travelled extensively in Iran, Iraq, Khurasan and also visited Mecca. Travelling, it may be mentioned, is considered to be an essential part of the life of a mystic. Saints, sadhus, fakirs and mystics are great travellers and wanderers. They visit important religious places, particulary during festivals or anniversaries when large number of people collect there. It helps them to understand the psychology of the people; it brings them in touch with different communities and sects; it also provides them opportunities to meet other theologians and spiritual leaders and exchange ideas with them. There is another aspect of these travels which is more important than reasons mentioned above. Wandering leads to detachment; the sadhu or the mystic comes to belong to the world and is not tied to any particular place. The whole world is his field of operation; he is free to seek solace wherever he finds it. He associates with sympathetic souls who, like him, are in search of the Indefinable, the Ineffable. It is claimed that, in the same spirit, Farid wandered in distant places and met some outstanding mystics and religious leaders. Suffice it to say, that when Farid returned to India after completing his higher studies and extensive travels, he was, with his ancestral background, a highly accomplished person, eligible for most high offices in the Sultan's service. But Farid's thoughts were elsewhere: he needed neither offices nor riches of the world. His was a spiritual quest and on reaching Delhi, he straightaway went to the *Khanqah* (monastery) of Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki and started living the humble life of a disciple.

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[1] *Life and Times of Farid* by K.A. Nizami, p. 16.

Before we deal with the spiritual training of Farid as a Sufi, it may be mentioned that three major influences moulded his life. The first and foremost influence was that of his mother, Qarsum Bibi, who as mentioned earlier, instilled in him the importance of offering prayers regularly and punctually. She was a very religious person and spent a great deal of her time in prayer and meditation. Many stories are recounted about the ennobling influence she exercised on people who came in contact with her. One story would do for our purpose. One night thieves entered her house. She was sitting at that time deep in prayer, meditating on the Lord's name. When the thieves beheld her, they were touched with the spiritual glow about her. They fell at her feet, repented and promised to lead honest lives. One of the thieves, who later turned a saint, was remembered for a long time and his grave was visited by people seeking spiritual solace. Qarsum Bibi inculcated in Farid deep religious feelings and dedication to prayer and love of Almighty God. From his childhood, the ideal of living a saintly and dedicated life was so imprinted on his mind by his mother that it became the sole aim and endeavour of his whole life.

The second influence was that of his father,Jamal-ud-din. Jamal-ud-Din was a keen scholar of Quran and later became Qazi of Kothwal. He inculcated in Farid love of learning and devotion to Islamic studies. Farid's home was surcharged with piety and learning. Life was simple but it was enriched with religious background and theological studies. The visitors were mostly Sufis, theologians or men interested in Islamic jurisprudence. It is, therefore, not surprising that Farid, with his innate bent towards spiritual quest, was strengthened in his resolve to devote his life to theological studies.

The third influence was that of his preceptor, Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, whose hospice Farid joined after returning from his travels. Bakhtiyar Kaki was a leading mystic of his times and had set up his hospice in Delhi. He was a native of Aush in Afghanistan which was a well known centre of the Sufi order organised by the former Mansur-al-Hallaj. He later studied at Baghdad which was at that time a great centre of Islamic studies and associated with some of the most eminent mystics of his time. It was here that he met Shaikh Muin-ud-Din Chishti and was so deeply impressed by the Sufi saint that he became his disciple. Soon after Chishti left for India, Bakhtiyar Kaki followed him. When he reached Delhi, Iltutmish, the Sultan, in recognition of his eminence as a jurist, offered him the post of Shaikh-ul-Islam but Bakhtiyar Kaki refused to accept it. He preferred to set up his own *Khanqah* and devote himself to the cause of propagating Sufism in India. At this *Khanqah* (monastery) came Farid to live with his *murshid.*

Hospices were a kind of hostel for the mystics where life was organised on a strict pattern. These were of three types. First, the large *Khanqahs* where separate rooms were allotted to mystics and the visitors. Secondly, the Jamait Khanas where groups of disciples lived together. And thirdly, the smaller houses, known as *Zawiyas*, where mystics lived in complete seclusion from the world. The inmates were divided into three categories: the elect, the companions and attendants. Guests were received at the *Khanqah* but were expected to stay only for three days but if they wished to stay longer, they had to work as attendants. Strict rules were laid down for the conduct of life at these *Khanqahs*. From early morning to late at night, every aspect of life was regulated. There were rules governing the dress to be worn by inmates, the time for partaking of food, the manner of receiving guests, the mode of address to Shaikh and other elders and the time for prayer and the form of penance to be observed. Punishment was prescribed for every irregularity. There were three other aspects of social life. One was the singing of music for spiritual and ecstatic inspiration. Another was the observation of the anniversaries (*urs*) of the dead saints and lastly there was the institution of *langar*, the communal meal open to everyone who wished to partake of the meal.

Life at the *Khanqah* revolved round the organiser, the Shaikh, and he directed the spiritual and social life of the place. All manner of people, not only Muslims but Hindus and others, came to *Khanqah* and asked for guidance and blessings. Yogis and saints of other faiths came to discuss theological problems. Sufis also worked as missionaries of Islam and preached the message of Prophet Muhammad.

The Sufis earned their living either by cultivating unproductive land or by the gifts or unsolicited charity given by others. Disciples were also permitted to beg. Whatever charity was received, it was distributed among the inmates. Large gifts received from princes or rich merchants were not hoarded but immediately distributed among the poor. Immovable property or regular payments were not accepted. Apart from the Suharawardis, the other *Silsilahs* refused the patronage of the State. The general pattern of life was ascetic;poverty and penance were considered as essential concommitants of spiritual advancement.

The Sufis generally wore patched cloaks and shaved their heads. The Shaikh's cloak, prayer rug, sandals, walking stick and, rosary were considered sacred and insignia of his holiness and when he died, they were passed on to his successor (*Khalifa*). The Shaikh also left behind a will known as *Khilafatnama*, in which he nominated his successor and enjoined upon him to carry on the work of the mission, uphold and propagate the faith and thus ensured the continuation of the *Silsilah*. He was usually advised to open a centre in some region and through an exemplary life of service and self-denial, spread the message of Sufism among the masses.

It may be added that the above mentioned disciplines were only the bare bones of a *Khanqah*. It was given flesh and blood by the Shaikh's personality and exemplary life. He had to infuse the spirit of devotion and surcharge the atmosphere with an intensity of spiritual quest which made the inmates willingly discard the demands of mundane life and live, as it were, in the very presence of Almighty God. The ultimate aim of the Sufi, union with God (*Wasl*), was not to be forgotten even for a minute and every method of training was employed which kept the heart in tune with the Ultimate Reality.

When Farid joined the *Khanqah* of Bakhtiyar Kaki, under the watchful eye of his preceptor and his inspired guidance, Farid had to undergo the arduous training of a mystic. His early life had prepared him for the rigorous mystical exercises prescribed by his spiritual teacher. He willingly accepted the long and lonely hours of vigils which he had to spend in pursuit of his goal. He voluntarily underwent the rigours of penance and fasts and the physical torture they entailed. The Sufis had borrowed the idea of the mortification of flesh for spiritual enlightenment from the Yogis in India. Many of the yogic exercises had been accepted as necessary disciplines for those admitted and initiated into the world of mysticism. There were exercises for holding the breath, for controlling the sensuous organs, for complete withdrawal from the consciousness of the world around and exercises for the concentration of the mind. The yogis also started with *dhyana*, which consisted in the holding of attention on a single object and ended in a *samadhi*. Deep concentration leads to the threshold of spiritual life where all consciousness of the external world ceases but meditation is a higher stage where the past, the present and the future become extinct, time ceases to exist and the finite and Infinite become one. The being and becoming coalesce; the individual is no longer an individual but becomes part of the Universal Soul. The result is eternal peace, a kind of light pervades over the mind and all fears, tensions and bodily ailments, all restrictions and limitations disappear. This is the spiritual experience which all mystics seek. This is what Farid sought to achieve through asceticism and meditation. Farid withdrew into his cell and spent increasingly greater time all by himself, reciting the name of Allah and sitting in a posture prescribed by his master. He also performed what is known as a *chillah*, i.e., for forty days he confined himself in a lonely cell and contemplated on the Lord's name. It is also claimed that Farid performed the *chillah-i-makus*, the discipline of inverted suspension. This *chillah* lasts for forty nights. Every night the mystic is hung by his feet and suspended in a well. It is difficult to say whether it is a fact or a legend circulated by Farid's followers. Some of the legends go to the extent of saying that this *namaz-i-makus* lasted for six months and others that this went on for ten years. But apart from the question of the duration of this *chillah*, all the admirers of Farid believe that he performed the *chillah-i-makus* at Uch in a well, near the mosque of Majid-i-Hajj. Considering the determination with which Farid set on his task and the tenacity he exhibited in his ascetic practi-

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ces, we are inclined to believe that he did perform this *chillah*. There is also indirect evidence in some of his verses enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. Two *slokas*, 90 and 91, are of particular interest:

> Farid, my dry body hath become a skeleton;
> Ravens peck at the hollows of my hands and feet,
> Up to the present, God hath not come to mine aid;
> Behold His servant's misfortune!

and,

> O, ravens, you have searched my skeleton
> and eaten all my flesh;
> But touch not these two eyes, as I hope to
> behold my beloved

(Macauliffe)

Farid is hung up-side-down in the well; the birds have made nests in his body and yet his search for God is not complete. In the next *sloka*, he entreats the birds to spare his eyes, even though his body has become a skeleton, so that he may have the power to behold his Beloved. Such was the extreme penance which Farid underwent to seek his Master. It matters not at what period of his life, he undertook to perform *chillah-i-makus*; the point to be underlined is that as an ascetic, he undertook the highest ordeal to achieve his goal.

Though asceticism helps to acquire self-control and spiritual discipline, by itself it is a negative virtue. If asceticism results merely in detachment from the world, it has to be counter-balanced by the attachment to the Lord. For Farid, asceticism is coupled with a positive vibrant affirmation of the Lord. "I live and die for thee" were the words which were always on his lips. Unlike the yogis, he did not believe in renouncing the world and going away to forest indifferent to the fate of the people. He lived and died for the Lord but at the same time, he was deeply attached to the people whom he wished to serve and uplift in terms of spiritual values. These two aims, the search for union with God and service of the common people remained the chief objectives of Farid's life.

During his stay at the *Khanqah* of Bakhtiyar Kaki, Farid, as a result of his prayers and penance, appeared to have attained a kind of saintly aura about him. Once Khwaja Mu'in-ud-din of Ajmer, the founder of Chishti Silsilah in India, visited the *Khanqah* of Bakhtiyar Kaki, his disciple. When he saw Farid, he remarked "Baba Bakhtiyar, you have caught a noble falcon which will not build his nest except on the holy tree of heaven. Farid is a lamp that will illuminate the *Silsilah* of the darweshes."[1] So pleased was Mu'in-ud-Din that he asked Bakhtiyar Kaki to bless his disciple but Bakhtiyar Kaki respectfully declined to do it as he felt that would be unbecoming on his part in the presence of his own *murshid*. Thereupon the two saints together blessed Farid. Khaliq Ahmed Nizami aptly comments on this unusual incident, "It was a unique honour in the history of Chishti Silsilah. No saint before him, or even after him, was thus blessed by the master and the master of his master." In the words of Amin Khurd, the disciple of Khwaja Nizam-ud-din, it meant:

> The two saints have bestowed the two worlds on thee,
> Thou has received kingship from these kings of the age,
> The realm of this and the other world certainly belongs to thee,
> The entire creation has been, in fact, assigned to thee.

It is not surprising that with such a pronounced saintly personality and with a reputation for piety, penance and prayers, the reputation of Farid spread among the people rapidly. At the *Khanqah* of Qutb-ud-Din crowds of people came asking Farid to write *ta'wiz* (amulets) for them or pray for them.

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[1] *Life and Times of Farid* by K.A. Nizami, p. 21.

It was a common belief among the rural people that such amulets warded off evil and also cured the illness from which they were suffering. The number of such visitors continued to grow until Farid felt that the writing of *ta'wiz* took so much time that it interfered with his prayers and meditation. He sought the advise of his preceptor but Qutb-ud-din gave the characteristic reply of a Sufi. "Look, the matter is not in our hands. We are only the instrument. The *ta'wiz* which you write bears the name of God and it is He who cures, so keep on writing." Needless to say Farid continued to write and give amulets to the needy persons. In a similar situation, when Farid's disciple Nizam-ud-din found it difficult to cope with the work of writing *Ta'wiz* Farid said, "You are distressed already by having to write out *Ta'wiz*. What will your condition be when large number of needy people come to your door and ask for a prayer?"

When Farid's training as a mystic was complete, his *murshid*, Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki, advised him to go to Hansi and set up his missionary centre there. Hansi was a quiet place and Farid thought that besides helping the poor in whatever way he could, he would escape the crowds of Delhi and devote greater time to prayer and meditation. Before Farid left for Hansi, Qutb-ud-Din had the *fatihah* recited and declared that after his death, Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar would be his successor and bestowed upon him his prayer carpet and staff. The other insignias of leadership were to be handed over to Farid after the passing away of his *murshid*.

Hansi was not such a backward place as Farid had imagined. It was a cantonment in the Hissar district and quite a historical place which figures in the wars between the Turks and the Rajputs. Farid spent many years in Hansi, some chroniclers mention twelve and others as many as twenty years. It is natural that Farid with his humanism, his piety and love of the people endeared himself to the people of Hansi and the surrounding areas. Some hagiographers have filled this period of Farid's life with a large number of miracles he is supposed to have performed. Even Max Arthur Macanliff's account written in the twentieth century, is filled with miraculous incidents. But men like Farid need no miracles to establish their spiritual status. He had all the virtues that made a Sufi an idol of the people and beloved of God. Shaikh Mu'uin-ud-Din defined these virtues when he said that God holds dear anyone who has "the generosity of a river, the benevolence of the sun and the hospitality of the earth." Though Farid himself lived in extreme penury and had to fast often for want of food, his *Khanqah* was open to one and all and every visitor found something to eat at Faridi *langar*. Not only Muslims but people of other faiths came to his *Khanqah* to receive his blessings and to overcome the doubts and fears that troubled them. There also came yogis and sadhus to discuss and seek illumination on spiritual problems. He made no distinction between Muslims and Hindus; to him the orthodox *ulemas*' approach to non-Muslims as *kafirs* was repugnant. Moreover, as a Sufi, it was not his mission to convert people. If some people expressed their willingness to accept Islam, they were welcomed to the fold. He followed the Quranic injunction that "there is no compulsion in religion." It is, however, true that by their insistence on the unity of God and the brotherhood of man, by the piety of their life and purity of their character and above all the benevolence, kindness and selfless service which they offered to people, irrespective of caste and creed, converted thousands of Hindus, particularly of the lower castes who had been despised and degraded for generations. Farid came to be regarded as a symbol of tolerance and understanding between men of different faiths and traditions. Amri Hasan Sijzi records in the *Fawa-id-ul-Fu'ad* that once Farid was offered a pair of scissors. "Give me a needle," Farid said, "I sew, I do not cut." He wanted to bring people nearer, closer through an understanding of each other's faith and not bring discord and hatred among them on the basis of the superiority of one religion over the other. Farid's deep devotion to *Shariat* (the sacred laws) became the basis of *Tariqat* (the way) and it was the path of love that he followed all his life which served as the basis of the cult of sufism. This love included both the love of God and the love of his creatures. In fact Farid insisted that the only way to love God was through the love of His people. And in Hansi, he sought to develop the atmosphere of love and through love overcome dissensions, discrimination, discord and communal hatred. This humanism and universalism became the creed of Sufi saints and earned for them the love of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to this day. Considering the poltical and social state of things in those unsettled, troublous times, it was something of a revolution that Farid brought about among the people.

In the meantime news arrived about the death of Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki. Farid went to Delhi and was handed over the mystic regalia and was declared the head of the Chishti *Silsilah*. Life in Delhi was altogether different from that of Hansi; it was filled with social engagement, religious conferences and stream of important and high placed visitors who insisted on seeing Farid personally. There was also an undercurrent of political intrigue and very often the religious leaders were involved in them. Feudalism by its very nature is full of tensions, discords and opportunism and since in the Islamic state, jusisprudence is a part of religion, politics and religion get mixed up and religious leaders are forced to play a second fiddle to the political bosses. It is, therefore, worthwhile to understand the difference between the approach of orthodox theologians and the Sufis towards the State. It is true that there were some metaphysical reasons for the hostility between the Sufis and the Ulemas representing the State religion. The Sufis insisted on the direct vision of God and through spiritual efforts sought union (*wasl*) with God in this life, here on earth. The Ulemas with their belief in the Day of Judgement and the reward of Hell or Heavens, vigorously rejected the concept of vision in this life. Man, they said, could not in any way have an intimate relation with God; it was the prerogative of the Prophet alone. Therefore the question of having a vision of God or meeting Him or merging into Him just does not arise. All he could hope for was the mercy and grace of God and the life of bliss in heaven. But the mystics insisted that there have been men among them who could not live even a moment without His vision. Moreover, the Sufis were indifferent to the riches of this world and also to the other world with its heaven and hell.

It may be mentioned that it was the Chishti Silsilah which insisted on a complete severance of relations with the government. But when the state is all powerful, it is difficult to avoid complete contact with it. Farid's own approach to the government is best illustrated by two incidents. When Sultan Balban sent him a gift consisting of a grant of four villages and some cash, Farid accepted the cash and distributed it among the poor and rejected the grant of villages saying that if he accepted the villages, he would become a *jagirdar* and not a Sufi and as such would have no place among the *darweshes*. At another time when it became essential for him to recommend the case of a certain person to Balban, he wrote, "I put his case first before God and then before you. If you award him something, you will be thanked for it because you are the agent of this reward, but, God in the real sense, is the only bestower. If you refuse it, then you are helpless in this matter because God is the only refuser."[1] Farid's advice to his disciples on the subject is unequivocal, "If you desire elevation in your spiritual rank, do not mix with the princes of the blood"

Sick at heast with the life and politics of Delhi, Farid returned to Hansi. But here, too, he did not find the peace he was looking for. Crowds collected wherever he went and made a great deal of demand on his time and leisure. An inner urge forced him to leave Hansi and seek some quiet, deserted and lonely place where he could meditate and attain the union (*wasl*) which was the be-all and end-all of all mystical endeavour. He left Hansi *Khanqah* in the charge of one of his disciples and himself moved to Ajodhan, later known as Pakputtan (Holy Ferry) which is situated in the Montgomery district in Pakistan.

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[1] *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 81

Farid selected a lonely and deserted place outside Ajodhan and built a small hut for himself under a cluster of trees. For miles around, there were sandy dunes and stunted trees. The place was infested with snakes and wild animals. Baba Farid was himself once bitten by a snake and his mother was devoured by a wild animal. For sometime Farid devoted all his time to prayer and meditation but later opened his hut to receive visitors. It is not an uncommon phenomenon that wherever a great saint set up his abode, the place acquires a kind of magnetism and attracts disciples, followers and admirers and soon a township grows up. It was not long before a *Khanqah* and a *Jamiat Khanah* were built and visitors from distant places started coming to pay their homage to Baba Farid. The fame and popularity of Baba Farid, however, became the cause of jealousy and enmity of the Qazi of Ajodhan. He instigated the local *jagirdars* and officials and they set about harassing Farid and his family. The Qazi went to the extent of hiring an assasin to kill Farid but, according to Sheilkh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, the assassin fled away when he found that Farid knew of his intention. The Qazi then reported to the Governor that the inmates of the *Khanqah* indulged in music and dance which were unislamic practices. The Governor made things difficult for Farid and his sons but, in the end, Farid overcame all this opposition through patience and forbearance. The Governor, it is said, was afflicted with some ailment and soon died.

During these years at Ajodhan Farid married and reared a large family. It is believed that Farid had three wives, and one of them, it is said, was the daughter of Sultan Balban. This is, however, not supported by history. Moreover, Farid, who did not wish to have any relationship with the Sultan and the bureaucracy would never have agreed to marry a princess. Again, how could Farid suffer such poverty if he had been the son-in-law of the Sultan? It is merely the result of the quixotic imagination of Ali Asghar Chishti, the author of *Jawahir-i-Farid*, which is full of miracles and impossible events. Farid had many sons and daughters and many more grand children. But it appears that with the accepted Sufi practice of distributing whatever came in the form of voluntary presents, the family had to suffer the extreme hardships of poverty. But Baba Farid was indifferent to all these hardships and accepted them as the will of God and continued to spend most of his time in prayers and fasts.

That Baba Farid's fame and influence spread far and wide is evident from the fact that his *Jamait Khanah* attracted men from all walks of life. Besides his disciples, this spiritual centre attracted scholars, merchants, officials and professional men who gave up their professional work permanently or temporarily and lived ascetic lives for spiritual advancement. History records the names of many eminent persons who came to serve in humble capacity at this place and found peace and solace they had longed for.

What were the reasons for this immense popularity of Farid? Saints are popular everywhere; once their saintliness and spiritual attainments come to be accepted, their following mounts up in no time. In India, particularly, the saints have a tradition as old as the hills. The ordinary human mortal is subject to pain, suffering, sorrow and tensions of innumerable kinds. He looks around for solace and support and knocks at all kinds of doors. Finding the world indifferent and much too occupied with material pursuits, he turns to Sufis and saints, who are the only people who have time and inclination and possibly the answer to all his problems. There are others, who had had enough of the world and have discovered the futility of the pursuit of wealth, the hollowness of pomp and pleasure and the transitoriness and impermanence of human existence and seek inner peace or spiritual guidance. Where else could they turn to except to the abode of saints and sadhus. Farid, as head of the Chishti *Silsilah* and with his reputation for piety, penance and prayers, his open house, his readiness to help the poor and pray for them and, above all, his humility and compassion made him the most loved of muslim saints in India.

Farid's use of the language of the people, Hindiwi, which was the earliest form of Urdu and Multani Punjabi, brought him closer to the common men. Unlike the *Ulemas* and men in authority, who conducted their affairs in Persian, Farid spoke to his audiences in the medium they understood and felt at home with. Farid was also a great poet of Punjabi, the very first, who sang of spiritual quest in the idiom of the masses, using imagery of rural surroundings which made his verses immensely popular among the people. One can imagine people reciting and singing his *slokas* and getting intoxicated with them. Add to all this, the singing of Kawalis and Ghazals and the rhythmic communal dancing on different occasions, all combining to create the ultimate ecstasy which knit together the *murshid*, the *murids* and every other participant in one homogeneous whole. They felt they were one, in faith and spirit, without any distinction. Here was egalitarianism at its highest.

Farid was also a great scholar and a superb teacher. The learned ones came from distant places to discuss theological problems with him and found satisfaction in the intellectual exchange of ideas. As a teacher, he commanded the respect of his disciples and more and more people came to him to be initiated into the mysteries of Sufism. He was probably a hard taskmaster but he had the virtue of practising what he preached.

Finally, not only Farid identified himself with the Indian masses but also Indianised Sufism. He, along with other Sufis in India, borrowed many features of vedantism, Buddhism and Bhakti movement. Following the example of yogis, the sufis practised extreme asceticism. Like the Buddhists, they went out to beg food. Like the advocates of Bhakti movement, they sang and danced in the ecstasy of the Beloved One. Moreover, they also adopted the language of the people and used it as the vehicle of their message. Like the Bhaktas, they made no distinction of caste, creed or nationality and with open arms accepted men and women of lower castes into their fold. There is another similarity between Sufism and Bhakti movement. The Sufis believed in the institution of marriage; they married and had children. Their asceticism and other-worldliness did not mean renunciation and retirement from the world. They were not indifferent to the fate of their fellow men. They loved God and his creation and the love of both was the basis of their spiritual life. Moreover, they emphasised the style of life rather than philosophising or intellectual hair-splitting. Like the Bhakti movement, Sufism sought to synthesise the twin elements of renunciation and devotion. And what is most important is that they affirmed the ancient Vedantic doctrine of union with God, the merging of the finite with the Infinite. And their path (*tariqat*) was the path of love and the Ultimate vision was synonymous with Divine Love.

The last years of Farid's life were spent in extreme poverty. It is hard to explain why, with so many followers and the great popularity that he enjoyed, all income or gifts to the *Khanqah* should have dried up. Towards the end, it appears, there was almost nothing in the house to sustain Baba Farid and his family. But this did not deter him from rigorously following his routine of prayers, fasts and penitence. The end came on the 15 October 1265, after he had thrice prayed, and he died with the words "O the Living and the Immortal" on his lips. Thus ended the life of one of the greatest saints of the medieval age.

The teachings of Farid emanate from three basic principles: the love of God, the purity of mind and detachment from wealth and worldly advancement. The love of God leads to the love of mankind and expresses itself through kindness, courtesy, generosity and nobility of actions. When the mind is purified, it is free from ego, pride, anger, lust and avariciousness. It also turns the mind from the lure of the external world to the quest of inner peace. It is the first step towards spiritual attainent. Farid laid great stress on the fear of God because it led individuals to assess their own actions and remember the Day of Judgement. Indirectly it serves as a plank for ethical life. Without deep consciousness of ethics and ethical living, mystical life just does not begin. High sense of morality and mysticism go hand in hand together. Farid constantly emphasised the living of a life of poverty, the rejection of wealth and detachment from worldly ambitions and aspirations. Attachment to the evanescent and impermanent world leads to sorrow and suffering and to endless entanglements from which there is no escape except through death. Not for one moment did Farid forget that the ultimate object of life was union with the Beloved One and, therefore, he sought to make people aware of the path of love, which was the only path which led to the cherished goal. He taught his pupils to accept the life of poverty and penitence and express their devotion to God through service of the poor and the needy. Farid did not propound any philosophy; he stressed a way of life and a code of conduct. Beginning with the strict observance of the *Shariat* laws, he led the initiates step by step towards *Tariqat*, *Marifat* and finally *Haqiqat*. Each was a stage, demanding its own disciplines and observance of the rigours of the penance involved. In this manner he sought to inculcate in them purity of life and passion for the quest of the True and the Infinite.

Farid stressed the equality of all men before God, irrespective of their creed or religion. The introduction of Faridi *langar* (common table) was another way of doing away with all manner of distinctions.

There is another aspect of his teaching which has a touch of modernity about it. In those leisurely, medieval times, he preached that time was the most precious thing in the possession of a mystic and a *darwesh.* Life was short and the mystic's journey long and, therefore, he must make most of the time available to him. At his *Khanqah*, the code of discipline was strict and strict punctuality was observed in the performance of various duties.

Farid stressed the Quranic injunction of *zakat* (charity). Men should give away a certain percentage of their income in charity. Charity was regarded as a high virtue and the highest charity consists in giving away everything one possessed. For spiritual life, possessions are hindrances and the more one gives away, the better he becomes.

The code of conduct Farid practised and preached epitomised the wisdom and understanding of the meaning of life by a great saint. What is more, Farid made them a living reality by adopting them in his own life.

CHAPTER THREE

Farid Mas'ud or Farid Sani

A MOST amazing and unusual incident in the history of religion led to the preservation of the writings of Baba Farid. It is claimed that Farid wrote verses in Arabic, Persian and some Indian local languages, such as Urdu, Hindiwi and Punjabi. But it is surprising that only a few odd couplets in Arabic, Persian ann Urdu have come down to us and these, too, are considered by research scholars as apocryphal and spurious. Professor K. A. Nizami in his excellent monograph entitled *Life and Times of Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar* mentions that the three books (1) *Fawad'id-us-Salakin*, the *malfaz* (conversation of Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki by Shaikh Farid-ud-din), (2) *Asrar-ul-Auliya*, the *mulfaz* of Baba Farid compiled by Shaikh Badr-ud-din Ishaq and (3) *Rabat ul-Qulab*, the *mulfaz* of Baba Farid alleged to be compiled by Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya are all, on the basis of internal and external evidence, fabricated and could not be treated as genuine material for compiling the biography of Baba Farid. No one among Farid's successors or followers took the trouble to preserve his writings. But his verses in Punjabi, which were handed down orally from generation to generation, found an admirer in Guru Nank, who carefully preserved them along with his own writings and passed them on to his own successor Guru Angad and when in A.D. 1604 Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) compiled the Adi Granth, they were incorporated in it under the title "Shloke Shaikh Farid Ke" and were, in this way, immortalised and sanctified as *Gurbani*, the sacred writings of the Sikhs.

According to the earlist *Janamsakhis* (biographical accounts), Guru Nanak (1469-1539) twice went to Pakpattan and held colloquies with Shaikh Ibrahim, one of the spiritual successors of Farid. During these discourses, Shaikh Ibrahim recited the verses of Baba Farid. When one studies the burden of these verses, the intense longing for union with the Ultimate Reality, the impermanence of man, the transitoriness of material things and worldly riches, the passionate love of God, the equality of all men before God, the importance of death, the judgement day and the punishment for sins, the organic fusion of spiritual and worldly life, the cultivation of moral virtues, one is not surprised that Guru Nanak, who did not identify himself either with Hinduism or Islam, found an akinness of spirit, a most compelling catholicism and humanism which appealed to him so strongly that he had the verses recorded and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

For nearly three hundred years, no one doubted the authorship of these verses. It was accepted that their author was no other person than Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar. It was M.A. Macauliffe, who, in his voluminous history of the Sikh Religion, while dealing with the life and works of Shaikh Farid, started a controversy by the following statement "Guru Nanak was born in A.D. 1469, so he could not have met the original Farid. It is stated too in the oldest accounts of Guru's life that it was with Shaikh Brahm (Ibrahim), Farid's successor, known as Farid the second, he had two interviews. It is certain that it was Shaikh Brahm who composed the sloks and hymns bearing the name of Farid in the Granth Sahib, though he used the name of the founder of his spiritual line as his poetical *nom de plume*." This is followed by a detailed geneology of Shaikh Brahm and we are informed that among his other titles or appellations, he was called Farid Sani or Farid the second. For the last fifty years, a controversy has been raging among the scholars and historians of Punjabi literature on the subject of the authorship of these verses, viz., whether it was Baba Farid or Farid Sani. There are eminent people in both the groups. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the question in some detail.

Professor Nizami accepts the facts that Baba Farid had a taste for poetry and composed verses. He also admits that a couplet composed by Farid in the local dialect of Multani has been quoted by Amir Khurd in *Siyar-ul-Auliya*. But he is disturbed by the thought that neither Nizam-ud-din Auliya nor any other successor mentioned the existence of such a large number of verses. He further says that the linguistic analysis of these *slokas* reveals that they contain idioms and expression of a much later date. The first, it may be noted, is a negative statement and the second contention is not supported by any examples. Professor Nizami however feels that the *slokas* contained "the traditional saying of the Shaikh" but concludes that the compositions are probably the work of Shaikh Ibrahim, who was the contemporary of Guru Nanak.

In a recent publication entitled *Punjabi Sufi Poets* by Lajwanti Rama Krishna, the author, while confirming the conclusion of Macauliffe, supports it by the following *sloka* of Farid:

> O Shaikh, no life in this world is permanent.
> This seat of mine was occupied by many a one earlier.

She adds, "from the above poem we understand that the author was not Farid-ud-Din but a descendant who was occupying the spiritual seat, hence Farid, the Second." This is an amazing conclusion. The *sloka* merely speaks of the impermanence of life and points out the passing away of the ancestors of Shaikh Farid. Even Baba Farid had two spiritual ancestors, Bakhtiyar Kaki and Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti. And the ancestry of Farid has been traced to Umar Faruq. It is difficult to agree with Lajwanti Rama Krishna because such an important issue cannot be decided by the interpetation of one single *sloka* and that, too, in our opinion, an erroneous one.

Macauliffe's analysis of the authorship of the verses is also very sketchy. This is no argument that since Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Baba Farid (1173-1265) were not contemporaries and simply because Guru Nanak met Ibrahim (*d.* 1552), the verses were, without any doubt, written by Shaikh Ibrahim. This is apparently illogical. Secondly, according to Macauliffe, "Shaikh Brahm holds a distinguished place in the list of great saints. He is called Farid Sani or Farid the Second, Salis Farid or the arbiter Farid, Shaikh Brahm Kalan (Shaikh Brahm the Elder), Bal Raja, Shaikh Brahm Sahib and Shah Brahm". It is surprising that a man with such high sounding titles finds no mention in the literary history of Sufism or the poetical works in Punjabi written by Muslim poets, while Farid Shakarganj is paid endless tributes both as a poet and a saint. Macauliffe, as usual, supports the greatness of Shaikh Brahm by recounting the miracles performed by the Shaikh. It is a pity that Macauliffe's whole account of Baba Farid's life is vitiated by his stress on miracles; he appears to have been such an uncritical and credulous writer that he lapped up whatever was offered to him and filled the pages of his book entitled *The Sikh Religion.*

Again the idea of the "poetical *nom de plume*" is Macauliffe's own invention. Professor Nizami has given us seven names of the spiritual successors of Baba Farid and twentyfive *Sajjadah Nashins* of Baba Farid's *Khanqah* but not one has used the *nom de plume* of Farid. Moreover, unlike the Sikh Gurus, we do not find Sufi saints using the name of their spiritual progenitor as their poetical *nom de plume.*

Macauliffe also mentions the long penance of thirtysix years performed by Baba Farid in a jungle. He also says that when Farid set out for the second period of twelve years, "This time, so as not to hurt any living thing, he tied a wooden cake to his stomach and, it is said, subsisted on the imaginary sustenance it afforded him for the full term of his vow . . . One day in the dire pang of hunger, it is said, he bit the wooden cake in the hope of satisfying his appetite. The reputed marks of his teeth are shown on a piece of wood still preserved in Pak Pattan." Macauliffe, while translating the *slokas* of Farid, forgot to inter-relate their text with his life story. Here is a direct and irrefutable reference to the above incident.

Farid, my bread is made of wood, hunger
is my condiment;
They who eat buttered bread shall suffer
great pain. (*sloka* XXVIII)

Macauliffe further mentions that in the third period of penance of twelve years "he (Farid) caused himself to be suspended by his feet in a well." This is the *chillah-i-makus* already mentioned by us earlier. While in this position "birds build their nest in his hair and beasts of prey peck at or devour his flesh," Macauliffe quotes the following composition of Baba Farid in support of this penance:

Farid, thy body is on the stake; thy head
hath become a cage; the crows peck at thy feet.

Having admitted that this is the composition of Baba Farid, he adds a most amazing rider to it. He says that "this couplet was subsequently expanded into 90th, 91st and 92nd slokes of Shaikh Brahm." Let us briefly glance at these couplets and assess their relationship with the life and poetry of Baba Farid.

Farid, my dry body hath become a skeleton; ravens
peck at the hollow of my hands and feet;
Upto the present, God hath not come to my aid;
behold His servant's misfortune! (XC)

O ravens, you have searched my skeleton and
eaten all my flesh:
But touch not these two eyes, as I hope to
behold my beloved (XCI)

O ravens, peck not at my skeleton; if haply you
sit on it, then fly away
At any rate, eat not the flesh where my Lord
dwelleth in my skeleton. (XCII)

Macauliffe has not mentioned that the *sloka* he has translated about *chilla-i-makus* is not found in the Granth Sahib and in its place the XC, XCI and XCII are incorporated. The four *slokas* are related to the same incident of Baba Farid's life. In the extreme penance, he has hung himself up-side-down, his body has become a skeleton, birds have made nests in his hair and ravens peck at his flesh. In the first *sloka*, he expresses his regret that in spite of all this penance and suffering God has yet not come to him. He wonders if still greater acts of mortification are to be undertaken by him. *Sloka* XC is a reiteration of the same theme: this shloka is the modified version of the first one (one not included in the Hranth Sahib). This modification may have resulted during the oral transmission of Farid's verses. But shlokas XCI and XCII are a continuation of the same theme: there is the expression of hope instead of disappointment. Farid implores the ravens not to peck at his eyes because he still has the hope to see his Beloved. In mystic terms, he is sure of the final union (*wasl*) with God and, therefore, in spite of having been reduced to a skeleton and his flesh torn to bits, the inner fire is still alive and the certainty of meeting God is firm and indestructible. In the last *sloka* (XCIII), Farid implores the raven not to touch his heart because therein lives God. This is His temple and it must be preserved. When he beseeched the saving of his eyes, Farid hoped to see God in the *sagun* (with attributes) form and what he holds dear in his heart is the *nirgun* (without attributes) God. All the four *slokas* are related to the same experience and the language and treatment is the same. The identity of the author emerges clearly. The saint and the poet are obviously the same individual.

It is strage that Macauliffe admits that the *slokas* pertaining to the wooden cake and *chilla-i-makus* are written by Farid Ganj-i-Shakar and based on his personal experiences and then goes on to say that *slokas* XCI, XCII and XCIII were written by Farid the Second. He does not take the trouble to explain how he arrived at this conclusion. The internal evidence both in terms of biographical details and linguistic treatment is sufficient proof to establish the authorship of these *slokas*.

There is another point that should be considered in relation to this controversy. From the existing works of Baba Farid in Arabic, Persian, Hindiwi and Punjabi, it has been clearly established that he was a poet. This has been confirmed by various scholars who conducted research on the development of mysticism in India. The Chishti *Silsilah* has all along sung the verses of Farid and the tradition of his poetry is well established. Moreover, the fact that one Punjabi couplet was discovered in *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, a book written more than one hundred and fifty years before the birth of Shaikh Ibrahim, proves that such verses existed long before his times. It is obvious that in view of the ascendancy of the Persian language, these verses were relegated to an unimportant position, as compositions for the amelioration and amuse ment of people living in villages. No one recognised the true value of these verses until they came to be incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. But all this goes to confirm that Farid was a poet who wrote in Punjabi besides other languages. But is there any tradition that Farid Sani wrote any poetry? The Chishti *Silsilah* does not claim it and there are no extant records to prove Macauliffe's claim that Farid Sani was a poet and wrote these verses. It may also be added that the tradition of Sufi poetry established by Baba Farid became a living force for nearly three hundred years after him. Many eminent poets like Waris Shah paid tributes to Baba Farid and regarded him as the first among the Sufi poets. No one has even mentioned the name of Farid Sani or referred to his writings. Even today at the *Dargahs* (mausoleums) of Muin-ud-din at Ajmer and Nizam-ud-din Auliya at Delhi, the verses of Farid Ganj-i-Shakar are sung but no one has heard of the songs of Farid Sani.

There are critics who feel that Farid, steeped in the scholarship of Arabic and Persian, could not have expressed himself in the rich and imaginative language of the *Slokas*. They doubt if Farid could master so much Punjabi when the court language and the language of the elite was Persian. When we recall that Farid's grandfather came to India fifty years before his birth and that Farid received his education in Kothwal and Multan and spent over ninety years in Punjab, it is not surprising that he knew the language of the people. Moreover, as a Sufi, he addressed himself to the common man, cut himself off from courts and princes and for his preaching and proselytisation he had to use the Multani dialect of Punjabi language. And the poet in him, naturally expressed himself in the language of his childhood and youth and employed the imagery of his surroundings.

It is, however, possible that during the passage of years when these *shlokas* were orally transmitted from generation to generation, the language might have been modified or altered. It is also possible that in the course of three hundred years, some new verses might have been incorporated or some old ones remodelled. And when the verses came to be written, they might have been further modified and linguistically made more up-to-date. But the method of presentation, the style and content remains the same in all these *slokas*; the heart-beat is the same; the spiritual quest is directed to the same end. The same mixture of Multani words with Persian and Arabic expression are seen in most of the verses. It is quite apparent that the tunes are borrowed from folk music and similes drawn from the village life. Most of the *slokas* are closely related to the cultural and religious life of the people of Multan and Montgomery. When we study in depth the details of Farid's life and correlate them with the contents of many of the verses, we cannot but conclude that these verses were written by Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar.

Lastly, we may study the controversy about these verses from the point of their inclusion in Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev. It is a measure of catholicity and liberalism of the Sikh Gurus that they included in the holy scripture the writings of a saint who was a muslim. They sanctified these verses and gave them the status of *Gurbani* (sacred writings of the Gurus) so that they have come to be studied with the same reverence as the compositions of the Gurus. And the reason for their inclusion, and the writings of another twelve pre-Nanak *bhagats* is that they lay emphasis on those aspects of spiritual life which the Gurus wanted to inculcate among the Sikhs.

There are four *shabads* (hymns) and 114 *slokas* of Farid incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Actually under the title "Shloka Shaikh Farid Ke", there are 130 *slokas* but 18 of them are the *slokas* of various gurus which serve as riders or comments on some of the verses of Farid. It may also be mentioned that not all the *slokas* of Farid available in the Punjabi language are included in Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Arjan Dev did not include the complete writings of any of the *bhagats*, whose verses found place in the Granth. He was highly selective and, it appears, wanted to be sure about the authenticity of the verses. In fact, there are some verses of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, which have been left out. Even among the *bhagats*, he selected only a few ones and left out some very important *bhagats* of Bhakti Movement, e.g., Tulsi Das, Mira Bai and others.

When Guru Arjan Dev compiled Guru Granth Sahib, he was fully aware that it was Shaikh Ibrahim who met Guru Nanak at Pak Pattan. Guru Arjan Dev was also conversant with the details of Guru Nanak's travels which were recounted in the *Janamsakhi* compiled by the second Guru, Guru Angad Dev. He had also with him Baba Budha who had known Guru Nanak and knew every detail of his life. Some of the scribes employed by Guru Arjan Dev, such as Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Sant Ram, Bhai Haria and Bhai Sukha were eminent scholars, deeply versed in *Gurbani* and would not have permitted any mistake to creep in. It would be observed that, in the Guru Granth Sahib, the author of each piece of writing is clearly indicated. It would not have been difficult for Guru Arjan Dev to have mentioned the name of Farid Sani if he had been the author of any of the verses. Guru Arjan Dev was himself a great poet and scholar and he would not have permited any ambiguity about the writings of various *bhagats*. He undertook this task of compiling the Granth with great sense of responsibility and used all the available source to ensure the correctness of the text and the name of the authors of the *bani* whose works he considered worthy of being included in the Granth. When a saint-scholar of his status accepts Farid Ganj-i-Shakar as the author of these verses, there should be no place left for a controversy of this nature.

We may conclude this discussion with the remark that it is high time that this controversy should be given a decent burial.

CHAPTER FOUR

Farid as a Poet of Shariat

SUFISM is Islamic mysticism. It is *Shariat*-based and in its earlier phase it stressed the Quranic injunctions of prayers, fasts, pilgrimages and religious rules of conduct. It also enjoined the study of Quran and Hadith. In the course of its development, it was influenced by Persian and Indian thought and imbibed certain elements of Indian idealism. Its most pronounced doctrine was union with God. As already stated, the early Sufis were ascetic and voluntarily renounced wealth and worldly advancement. Sufism also reacted strongly against the feudal order of Middle ages, its love of pomp and pursuit of pleasure. Sufis felt that the Quranic precepts of simplicity and brotherhood of man had been violated and as a reaction, they turned away from Sultans and emperors and retired from the world to devote themselves to spiritual advancement. The Sufis believed that union with God could only be attained through love; this they called *Tariqat*, the *marg* (path) of love. The essence of Sufism was God-consciousness to be experienced in a state of ecstasy. Besides the Sufis confirmed belief that the mystic could identify himself with God, (this doctrine was known as *Wahadat-ul-Wajud*—unity of being), he employed the medium of music to arouse emotional upsurge and ecstatic condition. For the propagation of Sufism, various

Silsilahs came to be established in Persia and many of them migrated to India because of historical compulsions.

With this background, we have to study the poetry of Baba Farid. Farid, as already mentioned, was the first poet of Punjabi language. With his background of Arabic and Persian scholarship, with his vibrant imagination and deep sensitivity, he transformed this undeveloped, almost rustic dialect and made it capable of expressing the deepest urges of man. Farid was also the first Sufi poet, who, when the mood came upon him, wrote verses in Punjabi which were the outpouring of a heart filled with the love of God and man. As head of the Chishti *Silsilah*, Farid practised, taught and preached Sufism. As a poet, he had to evolve language and idiom in which he could express the subtle doctrines of Sufism. At the same time, it had to be the language of the masses, because the Sufis sought to reach the masses, rather than the elite of the society. He naturally turned to Multani Punjabi, the language of his childhood and employed images and symbols of rural life to turn people away from worldly pursuits and make them God-conscious.

Life as constituted is full of pain, sorrow, suffering and failures. Its very stages of childhood, youth and old age end in death. Man wishes to avoid tension and escape ailments and their concomitant agony and torture. He detests old age, the growiog enfeeblement of body, the diminishing physical pleasures, the ever-growing restrictions and endless discomfort. And death is the most mysterious and frightening of visitations. He knows that death is the end of life and there is no escape from it. But the nature of death and what happens after death remain the eternal questions. To escape sorrow and suffering, man turns to saints and seers and learns to pray. Prayer does give him some satisfaction but soon it becomes a routine and a ritual and ceases to provide the inner peace. It is at this stage that the sensitive souls turn to mysticism and, rejecting the external world, turn inward and begin the long and arduous journey towards union with the Ultimate Reality.

Fully conscious of these limitations of human existence, Farid wove in his verses the recurring themes of transitoriness of life, the ravages of death, the grief and sorrow, the insignificance of worldly life and the brief span of life allotted to man. The constant remembrance of death, no doubt, highlighted the tragic sense of the wastefulness of human life but it was counter-balanced with the love of God and this provided an element of hope for the ultimate destiny of man. While, on the one side, he spoke of renunciation and asceticism, on the other, he insisted upon the involvement with God's creation. As an ascetic he continually sang of the simplicity, the austerity of life and laid emphasis on moral virtues like truth, forbearance, abstinence from sin but his deepest urges led him to sing of the Divine love and describe love as the only way to achieve the final *wasl* (union) with God. As will be seen later, Farid falls short of the final union, the stage of *Analhaq* acclaimed by Mansur; it is a stage where the desire of paradise and fear of hell have no place; where the externals of prayer and ritual are discarded and rejected as meaningless and where love rises to the stage of extreme ecstasy of forgetfulness expressed in the poetry of Bulleh Shah. But all the same, Farid's passion for the Divine Lover is steadfast and is expressed in verses of inimitable and touching sensibilty. The longing and sorrow of separation from the Divine Lover are sung through the symbols of human love and have the quality of eternal freshness. The Sufi poetry of Punjabi language passed through three phases. The first stage is represented by Farid when *Shariat* is considered sacred and is regarded as all important and the very basis of the ultimate spiritual experience. Farid sings of the Islamic way of life, its stress on the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. He is as much an advocate of Islamic culture as of Sufism. The second stage is that of Shah Hussain who tolerated *Shariat* but more or less ignored it. He was more in tune with Indian thought and tradition and spoke of *karma* and *samsara* (the cycle of births and deaths). He sang and danced and drank with abandon to reach a state of ecstasy in which he sought unity with his Beloved. The third stage is that of Bulleh Shah, who reached the apex of Sufism in his poetical thought. He rejected and derided *Shariat;* he would have no truck with heaven or hell. Indeed, he rejected Islam itself. He achieved his vision through the ecstasy of love. He completely identified himself with the ancient Vedantic thought and saw God in all its creation and all around him. He sang of Rama and Krishna and Muhammad and refused to accept religious distinctions. In terms of poetical attainment and spiritual achievement, he remains supreme among the Sufi poets.

Before we study the verses of Farid in some detail, it would be worthwhile to say a few words about *Shariat*. As already stated *Shariat* is the code of life and covers all its aspects, religious, moral, social, political and economic. On the religious plane, a Mohammedan must believe in God, angels, Quran, Prophet, the resurrection and day of judgement. He should also have firm faith in *Kalima*, pray five times a day, undertake fasts, go on pilgrimage of Mecca and give one-tenth of his earning as charity. His social life should be based on ethical principles of humility, contentment, generosity, justice and purity of life. He should also believe in the unity of God and brotherhood of man.

Farid had profound faith in *Shariat* and sought to mould his life according to its demands. He also advocated the observance of the laws of *Shariat* among his disciples and followers. He regarded *Shariat* as of immense value for spiritual life. Unlike the latter Sufis, he saw no contradiction between *Shariat* and the ultimate end of spirituality. In spite of the martyrdom of Mansur-al-Hallaj which highlighted the existing tension between the orthodoxy insisting on *Shariat* and the Sufi's experience which fulfilled the deeper needs of a religious person, Farid thought *Shariat* and spiritual experience were the two ends of the same world. One was only the starting point and the other, the ultimate goal. If *Tariqat* was the way (*marg*) of love, then *Shariat* was the way of life. In other words, Farid appears to have reconciled the conflict between the transcendental, the immanent and pantheism. He saw God in man and nature and, within the limited range of his experience, he found the observance of *Shariat* and love of God complementary to each other in his pursuit of the mystic union with his Beloved. He subscribed fully to the observations of Khawja Moin-ud-din Chishti, the founder of Chishti *Silsilah*, that "by attaining perfection in the observance of *Shariat* through pious conduct, one reaches the stage of *Tariqat* and onward he passes on to *Marifat* and *Haqiqat*."

We propose to confine our study of Farid's poetry to the four lyrics and one hundred and twelve *slokas* incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. These verses, as already stated, have been written in Multani Punjabi. Attempts have been made to translate them into English, but poetry, with its delicate and subtle shades of meaning and nuances, cannot be translated in totality from one language to another. Each language has a flavour of its own and it is closely tied up with its social and cultural background and its images and symbols are derived from its folklore, mythology and history which give it a special colouring of its own. It is not merely a matter of semantics or the communication of the meaning of verses but it is the heart-throb and outpourings of a great mystic and also the inner meaning that he is trying to convey through the music and magic of the words available to him. It is, therefore, natural that the impact of these verses on those who know Punjabi will be deeper and more profound than those who study them as translated in English. However, we will endeavour to convey some idea of the intellectual and mystical under-currents that run through these verses.

As stated earlier, even though Farid was a Sufi and in search of spiritual experience, he was the product of Islam. God is conceived as the One Supreme Being, all-powerful, creator, destroyer and preserver, unfathomable, shoreless and infinite. He is merciful but just, and, on the Judgment

Day, the virtuous would be rewarded and enjoy the pleasures of heaven and the sinful will be punished in hell. In Raga Asa, in a devotional lyric, Farid described the relation of man with God:

> Those alone are true devotees whose heart
> is sincerely in love with God:
> The ones whose heart is belied by their
> tongue are false, inconstant.
> The true devotees soaked in God's love are ever
> in ecstasy of realisation.
> Those indifferent to Him are burden on earth.
> The true devotees are those whom God attached unto
> Himself.
> Blessed in their birth, truly fruitful their life.
> Thou are the cherisher—unfathomable, inaccessible;
> I worship at their feet who have realised Thee.
> Thou alone the bestower of forgiveness,
> Grant to Shaikh Farid the Charity of
> Thy devotion.

Farid describes God as the One who pervades everywhere and is beyond the comprehension of human beings. He is the guardian and protector of his creation but he is unapproachable and infinite. Farid would kiss the very feet of those who have gained the light of God. The true lovers of God are only those who love him with all their heart and not the inconsistent ones whose actions belie their professions. He goes on to say that the vision of God is granted only to those who live in the ecstasy (*Ishq*) of God; the rest are only a burden on this earth. The true *Darwesh* is one who, through the grace of God, follows the path of love and it is he alone, who has fulfilled the true purpose of life. He ends the lyric by addressing God as the bestower of gifts and prays beseechingly that he may be granted the gift of His devotion.

Though, as a pantheist, Farid believed that God manifests Himself through his creation, yet he rejects the needless wanderings in deserts and jungles because God lives in the heart of man himself:

> Farid, why wanderest thou over wild places,
> Trampling thorn under thy feet?
> God abides in the heart; seek Him not in lonely
> wastes.

The *sloka* is important in two ways. Farid denounces the renunciation of the Yogis who leave their hearths and homes and seek God in lonely places. Renunciation for Farid meant the rejection of material things and the sinful ways of life. One must live among the people, seek union with God and, if God is in the hearts of men, help them to find it there.

Among the *slokas* of Farid, there is one of Guru Arjan, which is addressed to Farid in which the existence of God in His creation is described eloquently:

> O Farid, the Creator dwelleth in creation
> and creation in the Creator;
> Whom calleth thou bad, since there is none besides Him?

Farid is deeply imbued with the love of Lord and even when he is assailed with doubts, he insists on the service of God and strengthens his resolution by demanding from himself the patience of trees:

> Farid, perform the service of the Lord, dispel
> the doubts of thy heart;
> Darweshes require the endurance of trees.

Even when all the sweetness of life has turned into poison, Farid would turn to no one except God because he believes in no one else:

> See Farid, what hath occurred—Sugar
> hath become poison
> To whom shall I tell my sorrow except
> to my Lord.

In a delicately phrased *sloka*, Farid compares the sweetness of God to that of the ripe dates and honey and insists that with the limited span of life, the passage of each day, reduces the total pleasure to be derived from it:

> God is like the ripe dates, like a rivulet of honey,
> Yea, each day that passeth, taketh a day out of life.

This *shloka* can also mean that the life of man is short and he should make the most of the days allotted to him to taste the sweetness that emerges out of Lord's contemplation. This sweetness he compared to that of honey and ripe dates. Indirectly he compares this rich pleasure with the empty and momentary pleasures of the world which have a tendency to turn into poison as mentioned in the previous *sloka*.

Farid is conscious about the man's quest for peace and, also his desires to win over the world. Farid, the moral preceptor, advises that to gain peace, man must purify his heart and adds that the purification of self leads to union with God. And once this union is achieved by the individual, the whole world belongs to him:

> (Saieth God). "If thou embelish thyself, thou shalt
> meet Me;
> On meeting me, thou shalt be at peace.
> If thou belongest to me, O Farid, the whole
> world will belong to thee."

Farid portrays God as the Master whose Will will prevail all over animate and inanimate things. None dare go beyond the limits prescribed to him. Addressing a river, he says:

> O river, break not thy banks, for, Thou too has
> to render account to thy God:
> So flow within thy limits, as is the Lord's Will.

Finally we come to his own personal experience of the sweetness of God. He has tasted it, known it, felt it. The verses gush forth from his heart and express the richness of his feelings:

> Sweet are candy and sugar and honey and
> the buffalo's milk
> Yea, sweet are all these, but sweeter by far is God

Farid, too, had partaken of some of this sweetness and was rightly called Ganj-i-Shakar.

It will be observed that all through the above verses, there is a deep consciousness of God, His masterful hand is seen directing the world, His presence is felt in all animate and inanimate things. To the *Darwesh*, Farid advises to follow the path of love and to the ordinary men, he suggests their own embelishment so that they gain peace and have the feeling of belonging to God. In one of his verses Farid said, "O cursed be the life, if one has to depened on someone other than God.'' This total surrender to the Will of God is one of the important themes of his songs.

When we turn from this single-minded devotion to God to the subject of prayer, we notice that Farid insists on Muslims offering prayers five times a day as demanded by *Shariat*. He speaks like a stern preceptor and does not hesitate to call them 'dogs' who do not perform ablutions and bow down to pray at the appointed hours. He goes to the extent of saying that the head that does not bow before the Lord should be used as firewood under the cooking pot. Nowhere else we find Farid so dogmatic and demanding as in the following three verses:

> Saith Farid, thou dog who prayest not, this
> custom of thine is no good;
> Why dost thou not go to the mosque five time
> a day?
> Arise, O Farid, perform thy ablution and
> say thy prayers to thy God,
> And whosoever boweth not to Him, chop off
> his head.

Pray, what is one to do to the head that
boweth not to God,
Yea, use it as firewood beneath the
cooking pot.

Islam believes in the existence of angels, who at the bidding of God, perform their individual missions. Besides the angels, there is Satan, who leads men to commit sins and adopt evil ways. There is a direct reference to Satan in one of his *slokas*:

Farid, men shout and shriek and ever give advice;
But how can they whom the devil has led astry,
turn their thoughts to God.

But of all these good and evil angels, Farid often mentions the angel of death. The subject of death is treated in great detail. There is also a passing glimpse of the souls waiting for ages in the graves for the Day of Judgement, when they shall arise and will be sent to heavens or hell according to their deserts.

Death is a dominant theme of Farid's verses. It is the inexorable law of life that man must cease to exist. Death is ever-present; it cannot be ignored. The day of death cannot be altered and on the appointed day death swoops down as a bird of prey and snuffs out life. Farid uses the simile of crane (soul) who, unaware of death, enjoys himself on the bank of a river, when suddenly, death, in the shape of a hawk, pounces upon him and brings to end all his play:

Farid, the crane sitteth on the bank of
the river and sporteth;
While it is sporting the hawk suddenly
striketh it;
When the hawk of God striketh it, it
forgetteth its sport.
God hath accomplished such things as
could never have been conceived.

It is the unpredictability of death and the impermanence of life that haunted Farid. In another verse, he compares life to a tree on the bank of a river and to water inside an unbaked vessel; both can hope only for a brief existence:

> How long can the tree stand in peace
> at the river-bank,
> Pray, how long can the water remain
> in a vessel that is unbaked.

In a most poignant verse, couched in powerful imagery, Farid describes death as the bridegroom who comes to carry away his bride (soul), cracking the bones of the body. The soul has to pass over the bridge of Hell which is finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword. According to Quran, it is from the bridge that men will fall either into hell and burn in eternal fires or successfully cross it and will be blessed with everlasting peace and enjoy endless pleasures in the elysian fields of paradise.

In the Guru Granth, it is the very first *sloka* of Farid in which, with consummate skill, the poet describes the passage of soul after death:

> The day of bride to be wedded is pre-determined
> And, lo, on that day, the Angel of Death, of whom
> those hast only heard, confronts thee.
> And he forces the helpless life out, breaking thy bones;
> Yea, instruct thy life that one can challenge
> not the writ of God.
> The life is the Bride, Death the Groom, who marrying
> her, will carry her off.
> The body, after bidding farewell to life, O, to whom
> then will she go to embrace?
> Finer than hair is the bridge of Hell; has thou
> not heard of it?
> Farid, when the summon cometh, do not get
> thyself robbed unawares.

Here is a frightening portrayal of the helplessness of man when death confronts him on a day already fixed but unknown to him. It is the angel of death that comes. Man has heard about him but consciously tried to forget him. This fearsome angel comes, cracks the bones and forces the soul out of the body. He comes like a bridegroom, all powerful, domineering and overbearing and carries away the bride (soul). This, says Farid, is the writ of God, which man must realize, cannot be challenged. There is no escape from it; none can help man. The end comes and he must bid farewell to life. All passions, emotions and attachments come to an end and the journey after death has to be endured all alone, unaccompanied by any one. And, on this journey, the soul has to cross the bridge of hell and the soul must not look behind even if it hears voices shouting for him. The whole picture is meant to create a feeling of intense fear and horror in man but there is compassion in the heart of Farid; he wants him to realize what awaits him so that he turns his thoughts to his Maker and ensures peace and pleasure in the life hereafter.

In Raga *Suhi*, Farid again mentions the bridge of hell, which is not only narrow but is sharp like a two-edged sword:

> My way is fearsome and terrifying;
> It is sharper than a two-edged sword
> and very narrow;
> Over that is my passage,
> Shaikh Farid, prepare thyself for that road.

In this verse, Farid, after describing the hazards of the journey, forewarns all men to prepare themselves consciously for the journey after death.

How does one prepare for this journey? Farid makes it clear in *Raga Asa* that the only way is to attach oneself to God and become conscious of the fact that this body shall turn to dust and there is no returning to life after death:

> Saith Shaikh Farid, my dear friends, attach
> yourself to God

This body shall become dust and its abode
the unhonoured grave.
To-day God can be met, Shaikh Farid, if
thou restrain the feeling which agitate thy mind:
Had I known that I should die and not
return again,
I would not have devoted myself to this false
world and ruined myself.

In another *sloka*, Farid describes the whole journey of man; the hopes with which he comes into the world, the life he leads and the arrival of the angel of death and the departure of man on the shoulders of his brethren, and links up all this passage of life to the deeds he has performed in this world. It is only the good acts which will serve him in the court of the Lord:

The body of three and a half maunds lives on water and
grain;
Man entereth the world entertaining high hopes;
When the angel of death cometh, he will break
open every door (of the body),
He will take man prisoner in the presence
of his dear brethren,
Lo, the man departeth on the shoulders of
four men,
Farid: but the good acts he performed in
this world shall be serviceable to him in
God's court.

The inevitability of death is stressed time and again:

Before my eyes, myraids have passed into
the yond.
Farid, others are concerned with their fate,
I am with mine.

again,

O Shaikh, no man's life is permanent
in this world

How many have sat on the seat on which
we sit.

It is not only death which has received so much attention from Farid; the endless ages in the grave and the burning fires of hell are given equal emphasis. He is conscious of maggots and worms eating the flesh in the grave:

Farid, bricks shall be thy pillow, thou shalt
sleep beneath the earth, worms shall eat thy flesh;
How many ages shall pass away for thee lying
on one side.

The fires of hell and the groaning shrieks of sinners are described vividly in the following *sloka:*

Farid, Death is visible as the opposite
bank of the river;
Beyond is said to be flaming hell, resounding
with ear-piercing shrieks:
Some there are who have realization of this;
Know that the deeds done in this world will
bear witness against us in the next.

The long wait in the grave, the punishment for sins in the hell are linked up with the Justice of God based on the deeds of men. Devotion to God is the only way to save oneself; this is what has to be realized:

The mansions are rendered empty, and one sleepth
in the end beneath the earth.
And there are poor souls remaining long in wait
(for the Doomsday)!
So devote thyself to God, O Shaikh, for, today
or tomorrow thou breathest thy last, pray.

Here is a heart filled with compassion and sorrow for the man and to the thoughtless man, again and again, Farid reminds of what awaits him and wherein lies his salvation.

Farid employs the homely simile of a pitcher being drawn from a well with a long rope to describe man's passage through life. The beautiful pitcher is the body and the long rope is the chain of human breath which sustains life. When the angel of death comes, the chain is broken and the colourful pitcher is shattered to pieces. There are two verses dealing with this subject. In one, the angel comes as a guest or as the son-in-law, again laying emphasis on the final marriage of life and death and in the other, when the long rope is broken, it ends the life of those who have wasted their precious years of life on earth, unmindful of the fact that man is granted only one life wherein to seek union with his Beloved:

> The beauteous pitcher (of the body) is
> shattered; snapped the strong rope of breath:
> Whose, O whose guest to-day is the Angel of death.

And

> The beauteous picther breaks; snaps the
> tight rope of life.
> They who were a burden to the earth,
> why did they come to life, O why?

This is the eternal question: what is the purpose of life on earth? Before the rope is snapped and the pitcher shattered, man must realize the significance of life and endeavour to achieve something which will serve him in the life hereafter.

And those, who have forgotten the Lord, will undergo endless sufferings in this life and find no place in the life to come:

> Dreadful are the countenances of those that
> forsake the Lord's name,
> Here, they writhe in pain; and hereafter, too,
> they find no refuge.

But those who have cleansed their hearts of pride and avarice and remain untouched with the arrogance of wealth or the sloughs of despondency shall not suffer the fire of hell:

> Farid, make thy heart a plain, level all its hollows
> and hills;
> And the fire of hell shall never approach
> thee hereafter.

According to *Shariat*, the end of the world will come on the doomsday, when a great earthquake will visit the earth and everything will be destroyed. The souls shall tremble in the grave for such a cataclysmic day had never been witnessed before. The bugle will be blown and the dead shall arise and each one will be called upon to render an account of his actions.

Farid directs our attention to the doomsday in one of the verses where, metaphorically, he describes the world as a lake where great many birds come to make their nests. One by one the birds fly away, until only a couple of lotus flowers are left. They, too, shall shrivel up and finally the great lake (world) itself will dry up and there will be nothing left:

> The birds that peopled the banks of the pool have
> flown away;
> Farid, only the faded lotus will stand and the
> pool, too, will go dry one day.

And, then, the day of Judgement will come and the great account book will be opened and each soul will face the Master to explain how the time was spent during its sojourn on earth:

> Farid, men have lost four watches of the day in
> wandering and four watches of the night in sleep;
> God will call for thine account and ask why thou
> comest into the world.

In this passage, Farid expresses his tragic sense of grief on the valuable time lost by man.

The idea of sin and the punishment that must follow it is common to all religions. In *Shariat*, a great deal of stress is laid on it. For Farid, sin in the world is a living reality and in a variety of ways, he presents the severity of punishment that men must undergo for their sinful ways. Those who are given to the pleasures of the world will be singled out for punishment after death:

> Farid, some have great deal of flour, others
> have not even salt;
> When they all have departed, it will be
> known who suffers punishment.

Again,

> Farid, my bread is made of wood, hunger
> is my condiment;
> They who eat buttered bread shall suffer
> great pain.

Farid takes two similes from rural life and graphically stresses the amount of punishment that awaits the sinners:

> Farid, when thou wentest to the gate of the
> court, sawest thou not the gong?
> When the sinless thing is thus beaten,
> what shall be the condition of us sinners?

Again,

> Farid, see what happeneth to cotton, what
> befalleth sesame,
> Sugar-cane, paper, earthen utensils and charcoal;
> The punishment they receive awaiteth those
> who do evil.

In both these verses, Farid stresses the punishment that is received by innocent things for no obvious reason. What punishment will merit those who have committed sin? In both the verses, he slowly and deliberately builds up the idea of enormity of punishment the sinners deserve. The stress, of course, is on evil deeds and obviously, the objective is to put the fear of God in the hearts of men and make them lead nobler lives.

It would be observed that while Farid recounts so often the different types of punishment that the sinners would undergo in hell, he makes no mention of the pleasures of paradise. He chastises and castigates evil but refuses to offer any bribe in the shape of heavenly pleasures. He is a Sufi and his goal is the *wasl* with his Beloved. There is no place for heavens and a repetition of earthly plrasures, however glorified, in Farid's scheme of things. Evil is denounced because it comes in the way of pure life which is the primary factor and the first step towards mystical attainment. It is *Nirvana* that he wishes to attain, where the tiny spark in the human heart seeks to merge in the effulgent Sun, which is the source of all Light. Here pleasure and pain become non-existent and the individual soul loses its identity and merges with the Universal Soul.

The practice of social virtues, which form an integral part of *Shariat*, are given a prominent treatment in Farid's verses. In his own inimitable way, Farid sings of kindness, humility, forbearance, patience and other virtues which make life sweeter and richer. Virtues not only make one acceptable in society but according to Quran, God befriends those who perform noble deeds.

In a simple couplet, with a directness that goes straight to the heart, Farid advocates the doing of good in return for evil and points out that this is the way to gain the riches of the world:

> Farid, do good for evil, clothe not thy
> heart with anger;
> Thus shall thy body not suffer pain, and
> thou shalt obtain everything.

There is a whole philosophy of life contained in this verse. One needs to be a saint to be able to put into practice the thought contained therein. In return for evil to do good demands an attitude to life which is indeed rare. To discard anger from the heart indirectly means to replace it by love. But if one could accomplish it, he would be rid of bodily pain and gain everything. In a simple, homely way, Farid teaches the most profound principles of life; how to overcome suffering and how to gain inner peace. Here is art at its simplest and its best. And what humility does Farid teach! It is not merely turning the other cheek, it is kissing the feet of those who shower blows on you:

Farid, if men beat thee with their fists,
treat them not in return,
Nay, kiss their feet and go home.

But Farid goes still further and advocates man to adopt the low position of grass so that men may trample upon him. This, as a true ascetic, he tells, is the way to enter the court of the Lord:

Farid, if thou long for the Lord of all, become
the grass on the pathway for men to tread on;
When one man breaketh thee and another
trampleth on thee,
Then shalt thou enter the court of the Lord.

Even dust is not to be abused and condemned. It is true, it is the lowest of the low but do not forget that though you trample it under your feet all your life, it can change places with you:

Farid, revile not dust, there is nothing
like it;
When we are alive, it is beneath our feet; when
we are dead, it is above us.

Farid uses the simile of a leaking hut to explain how it is not possible for love and greed to co-exist. What kind of love is it that can be coupled with greed? Truly, it is false love. It is short-lived. It is temporary like living in a leaking hut. The play of words is touchingly beautiful in this *sloka* and the simile is strikingly picturesque:

Farid, where is greed, what love can there be?
How long canst thou pass thy time in a
broken hut in the rain.

In a similar manner, he teaches contentment. He says:

Eat dry bread, and drink cold water;
Farid, on seeing another's buttered
bread let not thy heart long for it.

For Farid, the buttered bread is not merely a matter of temptation, but it is the source of pain and suffering. Those who give themselves up to the pleasures of life, they cannot escape sorrow. Buttered bread is a symbol of rich living:

Farid, my bread is made of wood, hunger is
my condiment;
They who eat buttered bread shall suffer
great pain.

The virtue of patience, Farid teaches in three *slokas*, which merit careful study:

Make patience thy bow, patience thy bow-string
Patience thine arrow, and the Creator will not
allow thee to miss thy mark

and,

With such patience do the patient mortify
their bodies;

> They thus become near God, but tell their
> secrets to no one

and,

> This patience is the main object; if thou,
> O mortal, adopt it,
> Thou shalt become a great river and
> not a separate branch thereof.

Linguistically, these are probably the most difficult of Farid's *slokas*. Persian words are woven with basic Multani Punjabi. And the similes are drawn from different aspects of life — the world of bows and bow-strings, the mortification of the flesh by the ascetics and the flood of mighty rivers. But the goal is the same: with patience the mystic seeks God; that's his mark, his secret and his main object. That is what the mortal man has to learn. The mystic's journey is not only arduous but long and will demand all the patience at his command. What Farid is trying to stress is that the search is not in vain; the creator will surely reward the devotee by making him a part of Himself, a part of the "greater river and not a separate branch thereof."

And what is the purpose of all these virtues? Farid epitomises the whole thing in one *sloka*:

> Humility is the word, forbearance the virtue,
> Civility the priceless spell;
> Make these thy dress, O sister, and
> the spouse shall come into thy power.

In other words, ethical life is the pathway for the attainment of the spiritual goal. No doubt, for Farid, contemplation, ecstasy and union with God were the be-all and end-all of his life but these stages in the upward flight of a Sufi could not be achieved unless life was purified by ethical and virtuous living.

It has been pointed out that in spite of *Shariat*-based life and belief of Farid, some important aspects of *Shariat*, such as Quran, Prophet Muhammad, *Kalima*, *Zakat* and Pilgrimage to Mecca remained unsung in his verses. What can be the reason? The obvious explanation seems to be that what Guru Nanak helped to preserve as the *slokas* of Farid are only a small part of his writing. It is unfortunate that apart from the sayings of Farid and some apocryphal account of the miracles connected with his life, his followers failed to preserve the poetical outpourings of this great saint-poet in Arabic, Persian and Punjabi. Odd couplets of doubtful authenticity in Persian and Urdu are attributed to him and the main burden of these couplets is Farid's great attachment to God and his love and compassion for mankind. We are, therefore, obliged to fall back on the study of what is available in Guru Granth Sahib.

But that Farid was a deeply religious man needs no emphasis. He was wedded to Islamic culture and all his teachings are based on Quran. Even in his adolescent years, he had memorised the whole of Quran and developed the habit of reciting it once a day. He meditated on Allah's name and strongly insisted on the observance of saying prayers five times a day. He insisted on Muslims going to the mosque and offering prayers along with other members of the community. It is, therefore, immaterial whether he mentions Quran and Prophet Muhammad or not. Farid's whole concept of *Iman* (religion) is based on Quran as the revealed book and Muhammad is the prophet of God. Moreover, the absence of the word *Kalima* or its exposition is unimportant since one who believes in Prophet Muhammad, his acceptance of the *Kalima* is implied without any shadow of doubt. *Zakat* (charity) is mentioned indirectly in one of the *slokas*. In *sloka* 128, Farid says:

> These are few saints
> Who, though wise, are simple,

Though strong, are weak,
And, though having not, divide what they have.

This is a delightful *sloka* which comments on the necessary characteristics of a saint. A saint does not display his strength nor take pride in his wisdom and what is more, even if he has little or nothing, shares it with other people. This giving away of a part or whole of your wealth is *Zakat*.

And finally the absence of the mention of pilgrimage is probably due to the fact that Farid was turning away from external trappings of religions like fasts and pilgrimages. As he grew older, he devoted himself to the inner quest of the spirit; the urge for the union with the Beloved became intensified and demanded satisfaction. His asceticism took the extreme form of self-torture and his meditation and prayer took increasingly greater time. To such a man and in his state of intoxication with the love of the Lord, pilgrimage had little meaning. Fasts, however, Farid kept all his life, because, they were a part of the penance he undertook. But they played a minor role in the ultimate objective of *Wasl* (union) with his Beloved.

In the final analysis, Farid sought to strengthen the belief of his disciples and followers in God, Prophet Muhammad and the various tenets and doctrines of Islam. Through his emphasis on *Shariat*, he also tried to ennoble the life-style of all those who came in contact with him. He not only sang of God and His love but also of the social virtues of goodness, humility, forbearance and contentment. Farid was a noble saint, a great poet, a deeply religious Musalman and a most loving man.

CHAPTER FIVE

Farid as a Poet of Tariqat

IN Sufism, four stages have been mentioned which lead to the goal of union with God; they are *Shariat* (the code of law), *Tariqat* (the way—the Sufi disciplines), *Haqiqat* (awakening of the soul) and *Marifat* (Realization). In the pages of this book, we have traced briefly the evolution of Sufism in Islam. It started with the inherent sense of mystery contained in Quran in the form of its revelation and the prophet's ascent to heavens, the concept of God as Infinite and Ineffable, the asceticism and renunciation practised by some of the companions of Muhammad, the influence of Neo-platonism, with its emphasis on pantheism and the manifestation of God in all things, above all in the heart of man. From this emerged the idea of love as spiritual attraction, which led to the belief that love is at the basis of universe and that the individual soul is seeking to reunite itself with the Universal Soul, of which it is a part. This love has many stages from the concrete to the abstract. In Persian poetry, it came to be expressed in emotional terms and naturally religion came to mean love of God in an exalted stage of emotional fervour. The spiritual quest became synonymous with ecstasy or *Ishq* and the love of God came to be described in human terms of man's love for his Beloved. The symbols of human love came to be used extensively and the Sufis heighten the ecstasy of spiritual love by the introduction of music and dancing. In India Sufism was influenced by Vedantism, Buddhism and Bhakti Movement. Sufism came to be preached and practised in the shape of various Sufi *Silsilahs* but in the Punjabi language, in was given expression to by Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar.

When we study the only available writings of Farid in Guru Granth Sahib in the shape of *Sloka Shaikh Farid Ke* we find that they are arranged neither chronologically nor subject-wise. Obviously he wrote them at different times as and when powerful feelings stirred within him about different aspects of life and in response to his own experiences. The particular mood cast its spell and the poet in him gave expression to it.

Farid is rightly regarded as the first Punjabi poet of Sufism. At the first reading of his verses, we gain the impression that he is a poet of Islamic culture; he sings of God as conceived by Muhammad, of prayer in the mosque, of angels, of heaven and hell, the Day of Judgement, the rising of the souls, the crossing of the bridge of hell, and finally of all the social virtues enjoined by *Shariat*. But as we continue our study, the Islamic colouring recedes to the background and an interfused and pervading humanism comes to dominate the verses. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, Farid nowhere sings of Muhammad, his wars and the success of his mission. He has nothing to do with Islamic conquest of the world. He is not an Ulema or a Qazi denouncing other faiths and upholding Islam. Secondly, when he does mention different aspects of *Shariat*, he is more concerned with the struggle and of suffering man than with proselytization. Farid appears primarily as a deeply religious man who seeks to make man God-conscious but not exclusively of God in terms of Quran. His main subjects are man and spiritualism. He is deeply concerned with man, his short sojourn on earth. his uncertain life, the ever-present fear of death, the poverty and hunger of the masses, the in-justice in the world, the alluring, blinding attraction of pelf and power and finally the tragic waste of time in useless pursuits. When he sings about social virtues, they are virtues common to all religions and he advocates them because they serve as the threshold of the spiritual world. Farid belonged to that group of early Sufis who practised asceticism and renunciation and yet remained within the fold of Islam. But with the passage of years, Farid drifted away from the external rituals of Islam. He would also have no truck with the Islamic State or bureaucracy or Ulemas and Qazis. As stated elsewhere, they conspired against him and denounced him. They made things difficult for him and his children. But with patience and perseverance, he overcame all obstacles. He prayed and he fasted but all his penance was directed towards the spiritual goal. So, in religious matters, he followed the Sufi tenets of love. He preached the religion of love, or, in other words, followed the *Bhakti-marg*, the *marg* (way) of love. His was an intense devotion to the Lord and through this love, he sought to win over God. It was an all-absorbing love in which there was no element of hate for anyone. He loved God and His creation. This is what made him a Sufi and this is what constituted the difference between Farid and orthodox Muslims of his times. As we read Farid's poetry, we become conscious of his great love and longing for his Beloved. He seeks him with all the passion of his heart and undergoes the greatest penance in the form of *Chillah-i-makus* to attain Him. It is this love as expressed in his immortal verses that makes him a great Sufi poet.

Farid's first task appears to have been to make man conscious about the evanescence of life:

> The bird is a guest in the world's garden
> of beauty,
> When the drum of morn is struck,
> prepare thyself to fly.

This world is compared to a beautiful garden where the bird (soul) comes as a guest to stay for a short time. When the appointed time comes, the guest must depart. In other words, the world is a caravan-serai where the guest spends the night and when the morning drum is beaten, he has to leave it. However beautiful the world, no one should hope to stay here for ever. It is, therefore, wise to ponder over the life hereafter.

Farid draws our attention to the day of departure in an indirect way and makes us realize the instability of the world:

> Where are thy parents, O Farid, whose
> offspring thou art;
> Before thee, they have passed away; but
> thou still believest not.

It is indeed strange that we watch the departure of friends and relations but never associate death with ourselves.

To underline the recurrent thought of the impermanence of life, Farid darws our attention to the changing seasons when the leaves are shed and the trees stand bare and naked and everywhere he witnesses the transitoriness of worldly things.

> Farid, the season changeth, the forest trembles,
> the trees shed their leaves;
> I have searched all over in vain, all that
> seemed hath gone.

Another way that Shaikh Farid adopts to make man realize the approach of death is to stress the inevitable advent of old age with all its infirmities and regrets. Farid has written four *slokas* on the subject and each one of them speaks of the creeping years making themselves visible through the decay of organs and points to the inexorable end. And yet, Farid wonders, man does not forsake the pleasures of life and realize that even if he were to live for a hundred years, at the end the body will turn to dust.

Shaikh Farid hath grown old, and his
body hath begun to totter;
Were he to live even for a hundred
years, he will still be reduced to dust.

And again,

My teeth, my feet, mine eyes, my ears
have ceased their functions;
The body crieth aloud, "O, all
my loves have abandoned me."

And again,

Farid, the hair on my head is grey, my beard
is grey, my moustaches are also grey;
O my heedless and insensible soul, why
art thou devoted to sensual pleasures?

And again,

With these my tiny legs, I have traversed
plains and mountains,
But to-day even my ablution pot seemeth
a distance of a hundred miles.

And finally,

See Farid, what hath occurred—the beard hath grown grey,
The future is near, the past is left far behind.

Old age is a reminder of the end of life but this does not lead Farid to despair and give up hope. He became all the more insistent that this 'heedless and insensible' man should undertake timely action. Life is short, the end is old age and death, so why waste the precious years? In a most touching lyric of surpassing vitality in Raga *Suhi Lalit*, he sings of lost opportunities and passage of youthful years:

Listen, O Man, thou didst not look to the
tackle of thy boat when it was yet time.
In the lake swollen with tempest, how shall
it float?
Fugitive are pleasures like Kasumbha, burning
away at a touch:
Touch it not, beloved, lest it wither away.
This frail life-female is atremble under the
Master's stern accents.
Past is youth; never will the breast be
brimful again of milk; never again the love-embrace!
Sayeth Farid, Listen, sisters of my soul!
One day life's swan shall take its reluctant flight;
This frame will turn to dust heap.

Here Farid compares the passage of a soul that is not attached to the Lord to a rudderless boat in a stormy ocean. For want of timely action, it must end in disaster. Man is devoted to worldly pleasures not knowing that they are fleeting moments which, like Kasumbha, wither away into nothingness. Love and youth too, shall pass away, never to return again. The stern Master watches this utter waste of life. And one day the soul shall fly away and the body will turn to dust. Here is a sublime lyric with vibrant imagery and powerful diction warning man against his attachment to momentary pleasures and throwing away the one and only opportunity he has to save his soul.

In another *sloka*, Farid stresses the regret of lost opportunity and the impossibility of the past to return again.

When a woman is a virgin, she wants to get married; when
she is married her troubles begin.
Farid, she hath this regret that she
cannot again become a virgin.

It only means that the soul had one opportunity in this life to seek salvation but once that it lost, it cannot return to human life again.

Farid regrets that if he had known that his days were numbered, he would not have wasted his life so heedlessly:

> Had I known my sesames were so few, I should
> have husbanded my handfuls.
> Had I known my Bridegroom was so young, I
> should have been less vain.

Farid uses another simile to underline the same thing again:

> Had I known my ties (with Thee) would be
> broken loose, I would have tightened the knots.
> For, like Thee, O love, there is not another;
> I have searched the whole world through.

In the first passage the sesames represent the breaths of life, which, being numbered, should be husbanded carefully. In the second line, the 'Bridegroom', refers to God: if I had known that like a young bridegroom. God did not consider me worthy of His love, I should have been less vain.

In the second *sloka*, Farid says that had he known that his ties with the Lord will be loosened by worldly attachments, he would have tightened the knot of love firmly for he had wandered round the world and found none like Him.

In these passages Farid deplores the waste of fruitful years and denigrates the vanity of life. There is regret for the loss of the love of his Beloved but there is, at the same time, his vision of the incomparable greatness of God. In other words, since there is nothing so valuable as God, life should be devoted to the attainment of God.

Farid watched the panorama of life and was struck not only with the brevity of life, but the passing away of sultans and nobles who boasted of pomp and glory and the inglorious end of empires and mansions:

> They, for whom the drums beat,
> over whose head waved the canopies,
> and whose praises the bards sing
> and in whose honour the pipes shriek,

In the end they too find rest
in the burning ground
or are buried in the grave
like the poor and the orphans.

If life is the vanity of vanities and ends in death, what of mansions and palaces, to which one gets so attached? Here is the answer:

Farid, attach not thy heart to houses, mansions and
lofty palaces;
When unweighable earth falleth on thee, thou
shalt have no friend.

And again,

Farid, set not thy heart on mansions and wealth;
think upon the grave;
Remember the place,
wither thou must go.

And how short-lived and transient is beauty? With unusual irony, Farid comments on the fate of eyes that once could not bear the streak of collyrium and after death became the nest of birds.

Farid, I have seen those eyes which charmed the world;
Once they could not endure the streak of collyrium,
and yet in them birds
have hatched their young.

How vain are the beautiful ones! And in their vanity, they forget the Lord and the result is that all their elegance and charm is wasted. Farid portrays the picture of a damsel who adorns herself but goes to sleep without waiting for the beloved. The consequence is that the fragrance of the musk is lost and all that is left is the stink of asafoetida. In other words, it is the inner devotion of man that is acceptable to God and not the external rituals which in the following *sloka* are compared to the damsel's adornments as against her real devotion:

> She bathed and perfumed herself; and decking
> herself, she slept without care:
> But (being abandoned) the bad odour of the
> asafoetida remained in her, and gone was
> the fragrance of musk.

From the transitoriness of life, the impermanence of empires and mansions and the fugitiveness of beauty, Farid leads us on to the need of forsaking all pursuits which do not yield any spiritual benefit:

> Farid, forsake those occupations from
> which no advantage resulteth;
> Lest thou be put to shame in the
> court of the Lord.

With consummate irony, he derides those foolish people who cannot visualise the result of their actions.

> Farid, the Jat planteth *Kikar*, yet he
> wanteth the grape tree of Bijaur;
> He spinneth wool, yet he wanteth to wear silk.

No doubt Farid stresses the old adage, as you sow, so shall you reap, but in the final analysis, as a Sufi, he stresses the fact that so long as man does not discard worldly ways and overcome attachments that have chained him to material possessions, he cannot follow the path that leads to inner peace. It is only through the loving adoration (*bhakti*) of the Lord that one can be saved from being burnt by the latent fires of the world:

> I do not know what to do; the world is a
> smouldering fire:
> My Lord did well (to save me), else I
> would have been burnt.

Farid is a *darwesh* and it is the life of a mendicant that has shown him a new path, a path of renunciation, prayer and meditation which has saved him from the smouldering fires of this world. But Farid knows too well that it is not easy to tear oneself away from world and snap one's ties with it. The world is too much with us and to give it up and adopt the life of a *darwesh* demands a resolution and courage which few people can muster:

> Farid, since I walk in the way of the world, it
> is difficult to be like the darwesh at God's gate.
> I have tied and taken up my bundle of
> worldiness; wither shall I go to throw it away?

Farid also knows that many men put on the garb of a *darwesh* but they cannot divest themselves of malice and hatred in their hearts. He portrays a graphic picture of *darweshes* who carry prayer-carpets on their shoulders, wear the dark woollen clothes of Sufi fakirs, use honeyed words and yet have "knives in their hearts". In other words, they are malicious and spiteful and cause discord and dissension among the people. Outwardly they appear devout and saintly but their hearts are filled with darkness. There is nothing so repugnant as a fraudulent and masquerading fakir:

> Farid, men carry prayer-carpets on their shoulders,
> wear Sufi's robes and speak sweetly
> but there are knives in their hearts;
> Externally they appear bright, but in their
> heart is sable darkness.

In another *sloka*, Farid stresses the same thing: black garments do not make a fakir. If your heart is full of sin, whatever garb you may wear, you cannot become a *darwesh*.

Farid, black are my clothes, black my vestment:
I wander about defiled by sin, yet
men call me a *darwesh*

But this does not mean that Farid is against the black woollen clothes that Sufi fakirs usually wore. That was the dress of the ascetic, the symbol of his rejection of world's riches. In that dress, representing simplicity and poverty and divesting himself all silken raiments, he finds it easier to contemplate on the name of the Lord. Farid insists that one must light up the candle of the heart but he also knows that this can be done only by adopting the life of a *darwesh*:

Farid, tear thy coat into tatters and wear
a blanket instead;
Adopt a dress by which thou mayest
obtain the Lord.

Why does an individual take to the life of a *darwesh*? It is a hard life and an unending quest. There is a hunger that rises in the heart which cannot be appeased. It cannot be satisfied by the riches of the world, which, for some reason, lose their glamour, their worthwhileness. The visible world appears a husk, an empty shadow, a passing show of no permanent value. A compelling longing arises within demanding satisfaction. It cannot be supressed; it cannot be ignored. The eternal question about the meaning and purpose of life rises like a cataract suffusing and engulfing the whole being. The mysterious phenomenon of the universe and the world beyond disturbs the mind and shatters the peace, Questions come tumbling one after another. What is it that animates the body? Is it something permanent, something that lives even after death, when the physical body is no more? Has the soul or Atman any relationship with Paramatma or Brahman who created the world? Or is the world a mere shadow, Maya, and death, a blissful state of unconsciousness? No, the answers to these questions were long since given by the Vedantic philosophers in Upanishads and handed down from generations and have become a part of our culture, a part of our thinking. In *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, when a disciple asked Yajnavalklya,"Explain to me the Brahman that is immediately present and immediately perceived, who is the self in all things," the answer was "That is yourself. That is within all things." And in the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Uddalaka tells his son Svetaketu, "That which is the subtle essence, this whole world has for its self. That is the true, that is the self. That art thou, Svetaketu." Through various ways, this heritage comes to all *darweshes*, whatever their theological background, and they feel the presence of this all-pervading Paramatman within themselves and seek to unite with the universal soul. This is the unending quest, the unappeasable hunger.

Farid, too, was one who sought this knowledge, and endeavoured to achieve this union. That is why, he would willingly sacrifice himself to those who had renounced the world, taken to the hard life of the ascetics in the forests but lived every moment in the eternal presence of the Lord:

> Farid, I am a sacrifice to those birds
> which live in the forests;
> They live on fruit, sleep on ground and
> leave not their God.

Out of this love and longing for the Lord emerged *Tariqat*, the Sufi way of attaining union with God. For Sufis, love is the basis of spiritual experience. Love and longing for God are, therefore, given much greater importance than the sacred laws of *Shariat*. The love of God is based on renunciation and rejection of the world; it is exclusive; it does not permit attachment to anything else. As in Persian poetry, Farid uses the symbolism of human love to express his devotion to God. God is the lover and Farid the beloved and this relationship is presented in all its facets, the longing for the lover, the pain of separation, the hazards of the journey, the willing sacrifice of everything that one holds dear, the various ways a woman adopts to make herself worthy of her lover and finally the passionate and eternal union. For the Sufi, *ishq* (ecstasy of love) and *bhakti* (devotion) are synonymous.

Farid had to spend a lifetime in asceticism and penance to achieve the union he so much desired. He expresses his great sense of agony and frustration that in spite of the extreme mortification he had inflicted on his body which had been reduced to a skeleton, God had not favoured him with his presence:

> Farid, my dry body hath become a skeleton,
> Ravens peck at the hollow of my hands and feet;
> Upto the present, God hath not come to mine aid;
> Behold His servant's misfortune.

But this has not shaken his faith in God. He would not go to any other door to beg favours. He would prefer death rather than depend on anyone else. If God means to treat him in that manner, He had better take him away from this world.

> Saith Farid, allow me not, O Lord, to sit and
> beg at another's gate.
> If that is how thou art about to treat me,
> then take the life from my body.

Farid longs for his Lover and suffers the unending pain of separation. But this longing and pain are welcome because they keep alive the fire of love. He compares the pain of love to a monarch that reigns supreme and the body, without such suffering, as hell-fire. Life, full of love, in spite of its suffering, is kingly, while existence without love is compared to cremation ground or regarded as death:

> Men continually speak of the pain of love; O love
> thou art a monarch;
> Farid, deem the body in which there is not the
> pang of love as a place of cremation.

In a most moving *sloka*, Farid describes the state of his life without the Beloved:

> Farid, anguish is my bed, suffering the bed strings,
> Separation from the beloved my bed-sheets:
> Such is my life;
> Cast Thy glance of compassion, my Lord.

It is obvious that longing and separation are considered by Farid as essential for spiritual attainment. They are the means by which the compassion of God is sought.

Farid continues to employ the symbol of the woman's yearning for her lover and while describing the painful existences of the separated beloved, asks the pertinent question, what is the state of the women who have been disowned by their husbands?

> I slept not with my beloved last night; my
> body is pining away
> Go, ask the wife whom her husband has
> put away, how she passeth the night?

Farid is making a statement and asking a question in this verse. But the function of art, whether it is poetry or drama or painting is not to ask questions or make statements but to evoke an emotional response and give expression to the subtle and elusive life of feeling that usually defies definition. By feeling is to be understood the whole experience contained in the verse. The poet is trying to create an image of a woman whose whole body is pining away, every limb is turning and twisting and, as described in a *sloka* mentioned above, the very bed and bed-sheets have become symbols of anguish and torture. But this torment has resulted from one night's seperation from the Lord and naturally, for the mystic, the question gains immense significance which asks, what of those who have been permanently rejected by their Beloved? The enormity of the torture staggers the imagination. That is why

Farid compares such existence to cremation ground and calls for the mercy and compassion of the Lord.

In another *sloka* Farid describes similar experience of the woman whose body is in torture and the night of separation has become endless:

> Farid, the night has grown long and
> my sides ache and ache.
> Curse on the lives of those who have
> hope other than in God.

In *Raga Suhi*, Farid, with great sensitivity and in emotionally charged expression, delineates the portrait of a woman separated from her Beloved.

> I wring my hands and burn in
> the fire induced by the separation
> of my Master,
> I have grown crazy longing for
> my Spouse.
> Thou, O Spouse, was angry with me
> in Thy heart.
> It was through my demerits, and not
> my Spouse's fault.

From this image of the woman burnt out by the fire of separation and gone crazy longing for her Beloved, Farid goes on to the *Koel*, who too, cries all through the night and has been burnt black because of separation. The symbolism and the imagery have been employed with extreme delicacy:

> Thou *koel* sable-winged, what hath
> darkened thee?
> Sorrow of separation from the beloved
> hath singed my wings.

In simple words, the poet asks the *Koel*, 'Why art thou black' and the *Koel* answers, 'I have been burnt black by the separation from my beloved'. In these two lines, so simple yet so touchingly beautiful, the poet has packed the agony of a lifetime.

Like a true beloved, Farid is willing to make any sacrifice to achieve union with the Master. Beauty is one of the greatest gifts of God and Farid knows that every woman cherishes it more than any other thing. But Farid is a seer and knows too well that true love is far more valuable than beauty. Love can be permanent but beauty is short-lived. And beauty without the appreciating eye of the lover is of no consequence. Without love, beauty cannot survive; it just withers away.

> I dread not the departure of beauty if
> my Spouse's love depart not therewith;
> Farid, how often hath beauty become
> dry and withered without love.

In two of Farid's most popular *slokas*, he describes the journey to his beloved's home in pouring rain. They have the flavour of romantic poetry, particularly the great love sagas sung in Punjab. The distance is long, the lanes muddy and if he goes, the rain will wet his cloak but if he stays back, his love will be shattered. He calls upon God's rain to pour down as much as it can; he would go and meet his beloved so that the love is kept alive. In spiritual terms, Farid seeks to convey that the path (*marg*) of love is long and hazardous and if the devotee is defeated by the renunciation and asceticism demanded by the love of the Lord, he will forfeit the union that he longs for. There is no chance for those who do not stand firm in their faith and cannot overcome the obstacles that come in the way in the pursuit of their goal. It is a steep ascent and only those devotees will attain union with the Beloved, who discard worldly possesions. In the second *sloka*, Farid, with a dramatic gesture, calls upon the storm to visit him and the rain to pour down with all its might for they cannot shake his resolve. He is not going to be deterred by any hardships or sacrifices he is called upon to make. He is firm in his faith and has no doubt about attaining the *wasl* with his Beloved. Here is *Tariqat* described in most vivid and yet mystic terms:

> The streets are muddy; the house of my
> Spouse is far; but I am in love with my Lord.
> If I go out in the rain, my blanket is
> wetted; and, if I stay behind, I
> lose my love.
> Let my blanket be wetted in the rain
> sent by God;
> But I must meet my Love, lest it
> breaks and I'm lost.

In a similar vein, Farid expresses his determination to meet his beloved even if his body was hot like an oven and his bones burnt like fire-wood. Here is a verse expressing single-minded devotion and tenacity of purpose. Nothing will be permitted to come in the way; he shall steadfastly continue the quest and if his feet tire out, he will walk on his head. Using such simple and homely imagery, Farid is able to give expression to his deepest passion and devotion for his Beloved:

> My body is heated like an oven; my
> bones burn like fire-wood;
> Were my feet to tire, I would walk
> on my head to meet my beloved.

With years of penance and such extreme devotion, a stage reached when Farid felt one with God. His physical body ceased to play much part in his actions; he felt he had become ethereal and spiritual. He describes such a state of being indirectly. He says that if his body were cut, no blood would come out because those who are in love with the Lord have no blood in their veins. In other words, their whole being is pervaded with the spirit of the Lord:

> O Farid, if someone were to cut up a Devotee's body,
> not a drop of blood would he seem to have:

Yea, those who are imbued with the Lord's love,
have all their blood sapped.

The state of the soul is described in two *slokas* where soul is presented as a swan which, as an embodiment of purity, would not dip its beak in dirty water even when it alights on a pond. In other words, souls that are imbued with the love of the Lord, even when they come into the world, they are not soiled with the sins of the world and in their heart is ever-present the desire to return to their original abode. In the second *sloka*, Farid describes the swans alighting on a field of barley and people drive them away not knowing that swans do not eat coarse grain. Here, again, Farid stresses the point that a *darwesh* is not interested in worldly riches. It is only the foolish and unwise people who cannot understand them and doubt their intentions. In both these verses, he is stressing the spiritual state of those who have rejected the world and seek union with God:

The swans have alighted in a little
pool of brackish water;
They dip their bills, but drink not; they
thirst to fly away.

And,

The swan descends on a barley farm, and the people
go to scare off the swan;
But the unwise ones know not that the swan
eateth not the coarse grain.

Farid rejected the world, purified his soul through penance and life-long devotion to God and reached a stage where he felt one with Him. He tasted the sweetness of His love which he describes as richer than all the sweet gifts this world can possibly offer.

Sweet are candy and sugar and honey and
the buffalo's milk,

> Yea, sweet are all these but sweeter by
> far is God.

Since the gift of His love, in the form of *bhakti* (devotion), is so rich, Farid enjoins on men to make the most of it each day of their allotted sojourn on earth. Farid, in another *sloka*, reiterates the idea and says:

> God is like the ripe dates, like a rivulet
> of honey,
> Yea, each day that passeth, takes a day
> out of life.

The two thoughts run concurrently in many of the verses of Farid: the short span of life and the inestimable richness of spiritual experience. He makes it easier for people to understand the value or attraction of the experience by comparing it to dates and honey.

And finally, where did Farid find God? As stated earlier, he found it within his heart:

> Why wanderest thou through the woods, crushing
> thorn under thy feet,
> The Lord abideth within thee: why search
> him in the woods.

Here, then, in the verses of Farid, we find the three stages of *Tariqat*, *Marifat* and *Haqiqat* all mixed together. Farid was not a theoretical philosopher; he was not concerned with the logistic of these stages. He was a man of God and he sought to present a way of life that would lead to the ultimate attainment of God. Farid was conscious of the sufferings of man and his compassionate heart sought to find an ethico-spiritual solution which would help man to overcome his wretched condition. Like other saints and religious leaders, Farid realized that human suffering was due to man's attachment to worldly pleasures and riches. This attachment led to avaricious life and sinful ways. And according to Farid, man's actions would be judged and in the next life, man would be punished for his sins. The punishment would be terrible because if innocent things like bell and paper and cotton are punished so mercilessly, what would be the punishment in store for sinners? Farid also knew that life was transient and therefore advised men not to be prodigal in use of the "sesames of life." He paints many horrifying pictures of death, particularly the one in which death comes as a bridegroom, cracks the body and carries away the soul as its bride. He also describes the long years the soul spends in the grave and what happens on the Day of Judgement. There is an undercurrent of the need for pure life and the importance of inculcating social virtues. But all these things finally lead to the path, first of penance and asceticism and then of devotion and the love of the Lord. Again and again, Farid stresses the need to reject the world of senses and to devote oneself to the Lord with all the passion of one's heart. The journey may be long, the weather inclement, the hazards insurmountable but there is no stopping on the way. If your feet tire out, you must walk on your head. But there is the certainty of the final reward; if you own Him, He will own you. You will gain both the Beloved and the world. You will find him in your heart and the sweetness of God will be sweeter than ripe dates and rivulets of honey. There is urgency in the need to find Him and there is intimacy in the *wasl*, when the human soul becomes one with the Universal Soul. It is this spiritual experience which Farid sought all his life for himself and others.

CHAPTER SIX

Farid—The Artist

FARID lived in two worlds, the world of Quran and Sunnah, demanding a strict regulation of life based on the code of conduct epitomised in Islamic Sharia and the world of Sufism where he sought a personal and direct experience with the Ultimate Reality. He was deeply influenced by his parents and the religious bent of his mind was strengthened by the milieu in which he was brought up. He was a great scholar and spent most of his time in intellectual attainment. His studies were mostly confined to Quran and allied Islamic literature. It appears that he wrote poetry in the later part of his life; there is the deep colouring of a stern preceptor and a mature thinker. The imaginative flights of a youthful poet are altogether missing. His ideas came from his own mental processes, from study and from a vision of the hereafter. In spite of the busy life of a Shaikh running a *Khanqah*, listening to the woes of all those who came to him, he was essentially a lonely man. He left Delhi and Ajodhan because he sought to be alone with himself and his God. He rejected the world of courts and the rich elite and to some extent, he was not happy with social life either. His reaction to life was, therefore, withdrawal from it and a turning inward to the world of mysticism. His mission was to preach and practise the quest of God. He was at once a preceptor, a spiritualist and a poet. Though it is difficult to ascertain the chronological order of his *shabads* and *slokas*, they can be easily divided into two parts, one relating to *Shariat* and the other to *Tariqat*. In other words, they can be correlated to his two worlds and embody the teaching of a Shaikh and the yearnings and longings of a lonely soul in search of his Beloved.

The language Farid employs for the expression of his thought is mostly Multani Punjabi, the language of his childhood. But as he wandered all over Punjab, preaching his mission and exchanging thoughts with fakirs and *darweshes*, he not only imbibed words and expressions of Punjabi used in other regions but his own language gained a maturity and polish which became an ideal vehicle for expressing deeper thoughts. Most of his contemporary *sadhus* used Braj and Hindiwi and it is not only words and phrases of these languages that can be noticed in the verses of Farid but also the peculiar style and musical twist associated with them. Because of his scholarship of Persian, there is a large sprinkling of Persian words throughout his poetry. It does appear that being a scholar and a poet, he evolved a composite language, rich in words, phrases and imagery and capable of expressing the richness of thought and compactness of his style. He is a serious writer and his diction is literary and dignified. It has to be admitted that the Multani Punjabi has a sweetness of its own and Farid exploits it significantly. Braj, too, has a delicacy and turn of phrase which gives it a musical quality and texture of feminine beauty and though Farid does not employ it extensively, in some verses, particularly in the *shabad* in *Raga Suhi*, beginning with the words, "I wring my hands and burn in the fire induced by the separation of my Master", he brings out the music and subtle charm of the language. And the words from Persian must have, by that time, gained currency and acceptability in the language of the masses because they are an integral part of his thought and style and also at a later stage, became part and parcel of standard Punjabi that came to be utilized by Guru Nanak and his successors. It is, therefore, not surprising that there are verses which sound as modern and verses that are couched in the local Multani of Farid's times.

As a poet, Farid's genius is lyrical. He combines intellectual depth with emotional texture. There is a definite musical quality about his verses though it is a pity that the emotional abandon of a lyrical poet is missing. He is terse and concise; nowhere he lets himself go to express his dejection or emotional upsurge. The ascetic in him appears to hold the reins tight. Most of his *slokas* are two-line couplets except four of them which are quatrains. There are only four *shabads* where the love of God or the transcience of life are treated in some detail. He has a delicate sense of music and it does come like a gentle breeze to soothe the nerves. But since the *slokas* are mere couplets, it has not much chance to register itself. Music can only be displayed by repeated rhythmic pattern and this, unfortunately, is missing in the works of Farid. His *slokas* are burdened with thought; each one of them is a complete unit, embodying the total range of an idea or experience. He emotionalises the philosophical thoughts and through the use of similes makes it possible for the unlettered man to understand its content but since each *sloka* has a separate entity of its own, they tend to become axioms rather than philosophical principles. He has compassion but little sentimentality and often appears more as a preceptor than a poet. That he is a poet of great sensitivity, no one can deny but he is more given to teaching and preaching than to the sheer joy of singing a song. It is his approach to life that has tinctured his art; he is neither bewitched by the beauty of nature nor by the sheer of joy living. He is obsessed with the transitoriness of life, the impermanence of the world, the problem of sin, the eternal presence of death and the punishment that awaits the sinners and naturally that part of his poetry which deals with these subjects tends to become pedagogic. It is only when he deals with his love of God and uses the symbol of human love to describe divine love, that the true nature of his lyrical genius finds rich display.

Farid uses the imagery and similes of rural life. He describes life as bride and death as bridegroom; the limited span of life as sesames; God as Beloved or Bridegroom, and even as Spouse. He draws our attention to eyes with collyrium, to ponds, huts, boats, rivers, *Kikar*, grapes of Bijour, dates, honey, candy and compares soul to swans and hawk to death and crane to lost souls. He describes punishment in terms of the bell, cotton, paper, sugar-cane and charcoal. He speaks of crows and ravens that pecked at his dry body, the swan that alights on the lake and the brids which built nests on the lake-side and then flew away. He describes the world as a beautiful garden and of musk that is distributed at night. Life is presented as a beautiful pitcher of water and the rope as the breath of life. He sings of the virgin who is anxious to get married and the married woman who is burdened with the cares of the world. He calls men dogs who do not come to worship in the mosque. He draws our attention to hollows, hills and plains which give an idea of the countryside he lived in. There is mention of blacksmith and firewood and charcoal, of flour and salt, of dry and buttered bread, of soft and stringed beds, of robes and prayer-mats, of knives in the hearts of men and of drums, trumpet and umbrellas of the rich who will soon be buried as poor orphans. There is the *koel* which cries the whole night and is sable-black because of the love of her beloved. He derides his black cloak and vestments because he is masquerading as a *darwesh* and of the turban which will be soiled and of head that will roll in the dust. There are many references to conjugal life; the woman who did not sleep with her beloved and her body aches; women who are rejected by their husbands; women who sleep forgetful of their Beloved and of the good wife who has no need of any one else besides her Master. Farid also describes the changes of season, the pouring rain and the trees shedding their leaves. These verses are rich with the flavour of life and give an idea of Farid's concern and fondness for the people among whom he lived. They present a colourful tapestry of the rural life of his times.

With a few deft touches, Farid paints pictures using a kind of sensuous imagery. But the pictures are imaginative rathern than visual. They touch the springs of imagination and start a chain of reaction in the reader. Most of them are grim and frightening but there are some that are tender and loving. In the very first *sloka*, there is frightful portrayal of Death, coming on the recorded day as a bridegroom to marry the soul. It is described as the dreadful Spouse about whom men have heard but have not seen and he comes to take away his bride. He cracks the bones of the feeble body and takes out the soul. The poor soul has to cross the bridge of hell, which is finer than the hair. To heighten the effect, the poet repeats the idea that men have heard about the bridge but given no thought to it. What is more, when the summons come, there is no escape. The cruelty and torture and the inevitability of death are painted mercilessly and in vivid colours. There is another picture of death, when it comes as a conqueror and destroys the fortress. While the two lamps (of the eyes) are burning, he enters the camp, conquers the fortress (body), sits on the body and robs it of its soul and then departs. In its visual character, it is an appalling picture, almost blood-curdling. Farid uses few words but the words are selected with great care: *malik* for the angel, fortress for body, the lighted lamps for eyes, looting of the camp for robbing the body of its soul. These words evoke images which collectively produce a horrifying impact on the mind. In another *sloka* Farid portrays death as a hawk pouncing on a crane which is innocently sporting on the bank of a river. It is the suddenness of death's appearance and the speed with which the deed is accomplished that sends a shudder through the body. But Farid is merciless when he deals with the subject of the end of life and what awaits man after death. In another *sloka,* death is described as a river that, in its fury, washes away its banks and beyond life, is burning hell and the terrible cries of the sinners. The poet wants to shock his readers and knock some sense into them. Here is our poet with the preceptor's birch in his hand. Finally, there is the picture of death entering the body, breaking all its doors, taking the man as prisoner in the presence of his relatives and terminating the journey of life. Man had come into the world with great hopes and quits it on the shoulders of four bret-hern, forlorn and empty-handed. Farid adds that in the final analysis, it is the good deeds done in this world that will count. Morals apart, it is a grim picture of the return journey of the soul as a prisoner in chains.

There are other miniature pictures, e. g., that of the *darwesh* carrying the bundle of worldiness on his head or the one who wears woollen cloak and carries the prayer-carpet on the shoulder but has knives in his heart. There is a miniature portrait of himself as a *darwesh* in black vestment loaded with sins. However, the best portrayal of *darwesh* is that of men who have rejected the world and live in forest, suffering endless hardships yet with the light of the Lord shining within their hearts.

There are many portraits of young women waiting and pining for their lovers. But the best and the one painted in great detail is in *Raga Suhi.* It is a lyric of great intensity and fervour. In Farid's works, it is probably the most significant portrait of a soul in travail. It is packed with feelings of agony and distress. It expresses the intense pain and suffering of separation from one's Beloved. It presents the picture of a woman wringing her hands in agony and her body ablaze with the fire of seperation. She has gone mad in search of her lover. She dare not accuse her lover of ignoring her because she admits that it is she who had not recognised the worth of her lover. She has lost her beauty and is now regretful of her wasted life. She is like the *koel* which is black because it is burnt in the fire of separation from its beloved. She admits that no one can be happy when separated from her lover. It is only through the benevolence and mercy of the Lord that one can be united with Him.

But what is her condition? She is fallen in a dreadful well; she is alone without any companion. In other words, the sense of loneliness in this agonising world has overpowered her. Her only hopes lie in the graciousness of her lover.

The soul has still to cross the bridge of Hell, which is sharper than a two-edged sword and very thin. For this journey, the soul must prepare itself during its stay in the world.

Farid has painted this picture with great compassion and tenderness for the lonely and distressed soul in the world.

But the tenderest and most loving portrayal is that of the beloved who has to journey in pouring rain on a long and muddy road. She has the choice of either saving her blanket from getting wet or losing her love. She naturally prefers the latter. But Farid has, with consummate skill, packed so much emotion in these two verses.

Like other Sufi poets, Farid uses the symbol of human relationship between wife and husband or lover and beloved to portray his attachment to God. It is also used for death as the bridegroom and soul as the bride. In the former, it is love that binds them together; in the latter it is fear and horror that are the dominant emotional features. But the two themes, the love of God and the fear of the angel of Death, are not only the most prominent subjects of Farid's works but also the ones in which he displays his artistic maturity and deep understanding of human problems. It is also through these two aspects that the meaning and message of mysticism is communicated to his readers. As stated elsewhere in the pages of this book, this symbolism is utilized to portray every aspect of love and passion for the Divine Beloved.

When we turn to other *dohas* (couplets), we find that each one is a gem, shining with its inner light. Each one is an embodiment of some aspect of the philosophy of life, complete in itself and presented in an artistic and musical pattern. Even when Farid the preceptor is preaching the need of social virtues, his artistic touch and the sweetness of his diction is always there. Can greed and love go together? Divest yourself of anger and pride and you will be free of physical ailments and your life wlll be enrichened. If someone hits you, you should kiss his feet. The riches in this world lead to punishment in the next world. Be contented with the dry bread and let not greed touch your life. Can you expect grapes when you plant *kikar* and if you spin wool, do you expect to wear silken garments? In all these couplets it is not only the moralistic side of life that is visible but there is a deeper feeling of humanity, justice, love and everywhere there is an underlying thought of spiritual values. In the same concise and precise manner, he talks of old age, death, punishment, heaven, hell, vanity of beauty, pride of wealth, evanescence of life and the love of God. All the time, he is presenting eternal truths and the beauty of diction and the music of his verse embodies them with a rare charm of their own. And what is more, the message is crystal clear and never misses its mark. It may be added that when you sing his verses, they sink into the mind and slowly the greatness of the man, the sweetness of his language and warmth of his affection become apparent. He was the most human and loving of artists.

At the same time it does appear that Farid took a tragic view of life. Most of his verses deal with the darker aspects of human existence. The world is represented as a vale of tears and tribulations. The beauty of the world and joy of life are altogether missing in his verses. He wrote mostly about old age, death and impermanence of life and the terrible punishment that awaits the sinners in the next world. But one must not forget that with great passion he wrote about the love of

God. His devotion and dedication was total and complete. Both as a saint and poet, he was indeed great and both these aspects of his life have endeared him to his readers and followers for hundreds of years.

What is the image of Farid that emanates from his life and works? He appears like a patriarch, a venerable old Shaikh, a stern disciplinarian with a compassionate heart, a great scholar and a loving preceptor. A man of wisdom who has scanned the world and discovered that all its glamour and glitter is but a passing shadow. A devoted *darwesh* who dedicated his life to the attainment of union with God, notwithstanding the asceticism and hardships it demanded. A great and noble poet, who sang of his insatiable hunger for the love of the Lord in words of immortal beauty.

And finally, one who tasted the sweetness of God and wrote about it in golden words:

> Sweet are candy and sugar and honey and
>   the buffalo's milk:
> Yea, sweet are all these, but sweeter
>   by far is God.

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